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EXPLORING CRITICAL REFLECTION AS A POSSIBILITY FOR TEACHER EDUCATION IN A POST-COLONIAL CONTEXT (SIERRA LEONE)

BY
YATTA KANU

©

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Date: April 6, 1993

Dedicated to:

the memory of my brother, **Alhaj T.Z.Keller**, who taught me to reach for the stars.

ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt at a reconceptualization and re-engagement of teaching and teacher education in a post-colonial context in Sierra Leone. Based on arguments that current teaching methodologies are patterned on the technical rationality in education and colonial educational practices which did not provide meaningful education for the colonized people, the study explores critical reflection in teaching for possibilities of teacher education after the ravages of colonialism. Under the assumption that meaningful education is only possible through meaningful teaching the study seeks a deeper understanding of teaching by inquiring into the meaning of critical reflection and its relationship to meaningful educational practice. It stands on the hope that through critical reflection on what we do as educators, pedagogy will be restored to its original concern with helping others realize their full potentials as human beings.

Recognizing that much of current research and practice on teaching and teacher education is rooted in the empirical-analytic approach which favours a rational and technological understanding as against an existential-ontological understanding of teaching, the study situates the empirical-analytic orientation within its historical origins, problematizing it in the process and questioning the fundamental beliefs and assumptions underlying this approach to the research and practice of education. The case is then made for the need to reconceptualize teaching and teacher education through critical reflection on practice.

Because human understanding within the empirical-analytic approach to research is at best limited to narrow epistemological concerns, hermeneutics as a way of arriving at deeper understanding have been explored to inquire into the meaning of critical reflection and its relationship to teaching. Informed by Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics which relate conversation to questioning, the research employs conversation with the participants in this study to explore the meaning of teaching that is grounded in critical reflection. Through hermeneutical interpretation, which, in itself, is a constant self-reflective effort, the research reveals that while, for each of the participants, an undeniably important relationship exists between critical reflection and meaningful practice, a healthy pluralism emerges among them relating to what it means to be a critically reflective educator. These meanings include the following understandings of critical reflection: (1) a technical understanding within which critical reflection focuses on the acquisition and application of the technical skills of teaching; (2) a developmental version that emphasizes teachers' professional and personal growth; (3) a hermeneutical version which sees critical reflection in teaching mainly as the ability to interpret teaching as situational praxis; (4) a reconstructionist view of critical reflection as critical praxis requiring educators to examine and question the wider contexts of education and strive towards desirable change in order to make others more fully human. Some of these meanings do not seem to differ in any significant way from those revealed in the literature regarding the way critical reflection in teaching has been understood and implemented. Differently from the literature, however, the participants identify specific and innovative ways of encouraging critical reflection in teaching and teacher education in order to foster pedagogical relationships with students.

The latter part of the study draws upon insights gained from these understandings to explore possibilities of educating teachers in Sierra Leone to bring about the transformatory and emancipatory norms towards which all meaningful education is oriented.

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Chapter I

Introducing the study

A. Introduction

The Twofold Background of the Study

The background of this study is twofold: the autobiographical and the theoretical. The autobiographical background reveals my own personal struggles with teaching in a milieu that is predominantly technically oriented and functions to stifle creativity and independent, critical thinking in students.

The theoretical background critically examines the technical mode of teaching, situating the nature and scope of teaching and teacher education within this framework and raising some pedagogical questions arising out of this framework.

Both the autobiographical and the theoretical backgrounds underscore the need for this study.

The autobiographical background

This study has evolved from my experiences as student, student teacher, supervisor of student teachers and teacher educator, and my desire to make teaching better in Sierra Leone as a result of these experiences.

Sierra Leone was under the colonial rule of Great Britain for over one hundred and fifty years. When we (Sierra Leoneans) gained independence in 1961 we inherited an educational system that had been installed for narrow, instrumental reasons that served the interests of the colonial masters. The purpose of education was mainly to prepare a few

Africans to read and teach the Bible and to produce a special group of people qualified to fill a limited number of civil service and teaching positions in the colony. The teaching methods employed in the few schools were to achieve this limited and instrumental purpose. They were subject-matter centred with little or no focus on the students and stressed knowledge transmission by teachers and its reproduction by students for examination purposes. The lecture method in which a large amount of textbook information was passed on to students without encouraging them to reflect on or question the material was the most popular method of teaching during the colonial period. Indeed, critical thinking and creativity were deliberately suppressed in the teaching/learning process so that no demand would be made for political autonomy by the colonized people. The major interest of the colonizers was to ensure that the "uncivilized natives" digested the new cultural reality that their official knowledge was imparting. As I shall show later, certain fundamental principles of indigenous African education itself lent a hand to the success of the colonialist approach to teaching.

As a student, I remember that my teachers were more concerned with those teaching skills and methods which ensured an adequate mastery of the instructional material in order for us to pass examinations than they were concerned with asking whether their teaching had any real educational meaning or consequence for us. We received knowledge from them but we were perceived as incapable of producing or changing knowledge. Teaching was a monological process that lacked any theory about our creative capacity to interpret reality and bestow it with multiple meanings.

My teacher education programme at the university was a reminder of the instructional strategies which I had gone through as a student. Teaching was perceived as a craft in which the techniques which veteran teachers had accumulated over the years were passed on to prospective teachers. The emphasis was, therefore, on training us as skilled technicians with a large store of techniques at our fingertips ready to be applied to solve teaching problems. At that time I did not see anything wrong with thinking about teaching in this narrow, technical way. For me it seemed rational enough; after all, this was after independence and there was a lot of talk about "modernization" and "national development" (which actually meant economic development) and this had a serious link with education. Education was to provide the human resources that were needed for the "development" of the nation and teachers were the training technicians prepared to manipulate student behaviours in ways that could get them to behave in a predictable manner in the production of economic efficiency.

At the end of the teacher education programme I wrote a dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the teaching degree. This dissertation inquired into the attributes of the good teacher from the point of view of secondary school students. I was going to start teaching secondary school students and I wanted to know what they considered good qualities in a teacher so that I could cultivate those qualities. The findings of that study reflected the type of teacher training programme I went through. For the students that I studied, the "good" or "competent" teacher was the teacher with a solid grounding in his or her subject area and possessed the skills to transmit this knowledge to students. Having gained this information I became engrossed in mastering my subject areas (which were English and History) and the most effective methods of imparting the knowledge to my students.

After ten years of teaching in this way I returned to the University of Sierra Leone to do a Master's degree in Curriculum Studies. During this period I came into contact with some of the reconstructionist ideas of Henry Giroux about the curriculum that made me recast and re-evaluate some very comfortable ideas I had formed about curriculum and teaching. As we critiqued Tyler's (1949) rationale in curriculum development and discussed alternate ways of looking at curriculum and knowledge I became sensitized to the fact that teaching could be different from the predominantly technical performance and knowledge transmission which it was in my country and that real pedagogy lies not in prescribing absolute knowledge, but in creating possibilities in our teaching that would allow the students to do more and more critical reading of the texts (of actions and practices), and to go on asking questions.

My newly-acquired reconstructionist background led me to raise certain questions about education in Sierra Leone. First, if the reason why teaching was conceptualized in this instrumental way was because we saw education as a means to economic development, then why was it that this "dreamed of" development was not happening or, if it was happening at all, only to a limited group of people in the country? If anything, as evidenced in the 1980's, (twenty years after independence) a limited group of people had become richer while the vast majority of the population had become poorer. The human resources approach to education was evidently reducing individuals to disembodied factors of production without ingenuity and creativity, and minimizing their personal and social enhancement. The ethical implications of this approach, which were ignored, were becoming clearer to me every day. Second, if teaching was viewed simply as technique, a means of cultural reproduction and knowledge transmission, then where was the opportunity given to students to examine culture and knowledge in a critical way that could lead to a larger movement for social transformation?

Both as a supervisor of practising teachers and now as a teacher educator I have been struck by the predominance of technical and mechanical understanding of teacher education. Tyler's objective model which provides an easy way of measuring the end-products of teaching without making the ends problematic pervaded the lesson plans I saw from my students. Concern about their students performing well on examinations drove these student teachers to demand from professors in teacher education classrooms the skills that would enable them to impart knowledge effectively. Increasingly, I became convinced that there was a serious need to reflect on our lived world of teacher education. Huebner(1975a) notes that, as ordinary people caught in a particular "language web" there is a natural tendency to defend and promote what we are doing rather than find faults in it; it is, therefore very rare for a teacher to stand back and reflect critically on what he or she is doing. But I think that if we accept the title of educator with all of the ethical and political commitments this entails, then such critical reflection is exactly what we need to undertake in order to bring about a reversal in this trend of teaching.

My graduate programme at the University of Alberta has reinforced my view that there are other ways of embracing teaching than simply the technical, instrumental way. Through critical reflection it is possible to examine those aspects of teaching that have so far been taken for granted and move teaching beyond "techne" towards what the Greeks called "phronesis" which is grounded in ethical reflection and action. This study is a personal struggle to understand the meaning of "critical reflection" in teaching and see what possibility it has for changing teaching and teacher education in Sierra Leone.

B. The theoretical background

The investigation of the teaching process has always been of crucial importance to educators, involving a concerted effort to understand the phenomenon of teaching, to learn how to improve its performance and to discover better ways of preparing individuals who wish to teach. In teacher education, especially, concern over those teaching behaviours that can lead to maximum student achievement has governed research into teacher effectiveness which has resulted in the emergence of competing and conflicting models of teacher education programmes. These models have ranged from the "behaviouristic" (Skinner, 1968) which stresses specific observable teaching skills identified in advance, through the "traditional craft" (Mann, quoted in Saylor, 1976) which emphasizes the accumulated wisdom of experienced practitioners, to the "concerns-based" (Fuller,1971) which is a personalized approach advocating that the content of a teacher education curriculum should be matched with the level of concerns that student teachers are experiencing at a particular time.

What is common to all these approaches to teacher preparation is that they are built on the integrative stance that the curriculum for teacher education would be constructed primarily with a view towards helping student teachers survive more comfortably within a teaching context that is largely taken for granted. Each is a variation of the Performance or Competency-Based Teacher Education (CBTE) which emerged in the latter part of the 1960's and was propagated throughout the 1970's. Following a dramatic expansion in the school system, industrialization and bureaucratized administration, the CBTE approach to teacher education emerged as a response to the pressure for accountability and performance measures in education in the U.S.A.

Although CBTE involves many variations they all engage an empirical/analytic (Aoki, 1988) approach to pedagogy which has become the first and probably the most dominant trend in the current research and practice of teacher education. Otherwise known to most educators as the "science" enterprise or the "scientific-technological" approach, the empirical/analytic approach carries a view of teaching that is instrumental and technique-centred, and sees teaching mainly as a set of *a priori* activities in which teachers engage in order to achieve pre-determined objectives which can be observed and measured. Its basic intent is to control teaching by generating empirical, analytic and technical knowledge which is generalizable to all teaching situations and which enhances efficiency, certainty and predictability in teaching. This approach emphasizes three areas: behavioural objectives; activities organized to achieve the objectives; specific outcomes in students which are evaluated on the input-output model of a factory. It is an orientation to teaching that sees students mainly as a productive resource for the labour market.

Beyer (1987) refers to this teaching orientation as having a "technocratic rationality" which imposes the logic of corporate and technocratic efficiency and managerialism upon how schools and educational institutions should be run. The technocratic rationality in teacher education emphasizes the technical skills that are necessary for the proficient performance of teaching. Borrowman (1956) explains education that is technically oriented:

> Education functions technically when its purpose is the cultivation of skill in the actual performance of a previously determined task. It is less concerned with the determination of purpose and policy and more concerned with their implementation. Education which aims at technical proficiency generally places a premium on the reduction of specific tasks to effective routine (pp.4-5).

Within the technocratic perspective teaching takes on a technical aura that removes it from an analysis of the contextual determinants like those in which it occurs. Techniques become ends in themselves and knowledge is conveyed to students as something fixed and unquestionable rather than as a human construction. Beyer (1987) argues that within such a perspective, knowledge is "broken into manageable bits" and communicated to student teachers as certain, objective and scientific without allowing them to reflect critically on the knowledge. When knowledge is given such a fixed meaning it ceases to be expressed as a "transformative social activity" (Wexler, 1982, p.144) and we lose our ability and power to understand and transform it. Sartre (quoted in Freire, 1970) has labeled this form of pedagogy as "digestive" because it is a process in which information is fed to students by teachers in order to fill them out. Freire (1970), in a similar vein, refers to this concept of education as the "banking" system in which education becomes an act of depositing factual knowledge and the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as consuming knowledge from their teachers without getting the chance to contribute towards the construction of that knowledge. It is a transmission relationship in which pedagogy as the act of dialogic engagement of teacher, learner and knowledge is assumed but its productivity is denied.

The questions that arise out of such a teaching context are twofold: First, what is the understanding of teaching in technical and banking education? Second, why is this understanding of teaching too narrow? In my view a limited, technical understanding of teaching consisting largely of knowledge transmission cannot be considered as sufficient because teaching is really much more than this. According to Heidegger (1977),

> ...what teaching calls for is this: to let learn....If the relationship between the teacher and the learner is genuine...there is never a place for it in the authority of know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official...(p.356).

It would appear from Heidegger's understanding of teaching that a major concern of every teacher should be to relate to his or her students in a way that can allow this learning to happen. In order to prepare teachers committed to "letting learning happen" several things are required to change the current tendencies in teacher education. Instead of an obsession with the scientific methods of teaching, teaching has to be understood in terms of more humane considerations than "cost-effective management of human resources" (Bowers, 1982, p.540). A new approach to teaching must recognize the ways in which political, social and ideological contexts are enmeshed with knowledge and action. Beyer (1987) reminds us that although it is worthwhile pursuing knowledge for its own sake, knowledge must be seen as useful and valuable to the extent that it works towards personal and social realities that are enhancing, that work towards socially just communities and help achieve alternate worlds (p.29). Accordingly, the aim of teacher education ought not to be an over preoccupation with the achievement of pre-specified, measurable outcomes through the means of accumulated techniques, but the encouragement of practical reason that sees education as the nurturing of human minds, hearts and spirits.

The sort of teacher preparation effort required to help achieve this aim would differ greatly from the technical orientation I have described above. It would necessitate a move towards a conception of education based on dialogue, inquiry and critical reflection about education, teaching and the context in which teaching occurs. It also involves thinking educational problems beyond what has been taken for granted in our everyday commitments. In seeing the necessity of challenging the taken-for-granted in order to build a new pedagogy, Greene (1978) has this to say:

> The crucial problem, I believe, is the problem of challenging what is taken for granted and transmitted as taken-for-granted: ideas of hierarchy, of deserved deficits, of delayed gratification, and of mechanical time schemes are in tension with inner time. A new pedagogy is obviously required, one that will free persons to understand the ways in which each of them reaches out from his or her location to constitute a common continent, a common world (p.70).

If I have a motive for undertaking this study, it lies in the belief that through reflecting critically on practice, teaching and teacher education could be improved. I am interested in the meaning that critically reflective practice has for student teachers and others involved with teaching and teacher education, and the relevance it has to meaningful practice. For me an inquiry into the meaning of critical reflection in teaching is an inquiry into the pedagogy of teacher education.

C. Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to come to a deeper understanding of the meaning of critically reflective practice in teaching by interpreting a series of conversations held with student teachers, co-operating teachers and faculty consultants. On the basis of insights derived through this process, the study will attempt to explore possibilities for improving the performance of teaching in general, and teaching in Sierra Leone in particular.

Research Questions

Through reflections on my personal experiences of teaching and teacher education and on the theoretical discussions of the technological orientation to teaching which I have presented, I have arrived at some questions which guide me through my inquiry into the meaning of critical reflection in teaching. The major question this study inquires into is: How can we structure a programme of teacher education that prepares teachers who can relate to students in a pedagogical way?

By "pedagogical" I mean a responsible and thoughtful way of relating to the students, which can provide them with meaningful educational experiences. In essence my research question centres around what it means to be a teacher and how one learns to become one.

There are many specific questions which guide me in the investigation of this major question. They are:

1. What are the predominant ways in which teaching and teacher education have been understood and practised?
2. How have these understandings been established?
3. What are their problems and limitations for teaching?
4. Why is there a need for reconceptualization of teaching and teacher education based on critical reflection in practice?
5. What are the predominant understandings of critically reflective practice?
6. What are the possibilities and limitations of these understandings for teaching?
7. How can we arrive at a deeper understanding of teaching?
8. Is there a relationship between critical reflection and teaching? What is the nature of this relationship?
9. How can we create spaces to promote critical reflection in practice?
10. What possibility does critical reflection hold for improving teaching in a post-colonial context like Sierra Leone?

D. **Significance of the Study**

Many teacher education programmes, especially in my own country, are based on the technical understanding of teaching which views teaching as an applied science and teachers as the executors of the laws and principles of "effective" teaching to achieve predetermined ends. The programmes are also designed to make student teachers survive more comfortably within teaching contexts that are largely taken-for-granted rather than making these contexts a focus of critical analyses. The technocratic approach to teaching assigns only utilitarian values to education and those experiencing such education become nothing more than productive resources for labour market. There is need for a teacher education programme that prepares teachers who take teaching beyond this technocratic and "rational" view, to see it also as a reflective practice involving moral, ethical considerations including an analysis of the wider contexts in which teaching occurs and a concern for the human enhancement of students. This study is an attempt to arrive at such a view of teaching.

An additional significance of this study, of personal benefit to me, is that it will provide needed in-depth knowledge about the concept referred to as "critical reflection" in teaching even as I am planning to incorporate it into teacher education in Sierra Leone. By doing this study, I will become aware of the possibilities and constraints of "critical reflection", as well as what it may or may not be able to accomplish in teaching. Where resources are scarce, as in Sierra Leone, it will be unwise to utilize the little that is available to implement something new simply because it is practised elsewhere without first learning thoroughly about it. Reflective practice has been conceptualized in many different ways and various programmes aimed at preparing reflective practitioners have emerged. A research of this nature, done in a context where the critically reflective approach to teaching is being tried out, will give me the opportunity to go beyond the "said" about reflective practice and arrive at my own meaning of this approach to teacher preparation.

The background to this study reveals that there is a need for a teacher education curriculum that emphasizes critical reflection in teaching. The ex-colonial masters, and the foreign experts who have been brought in from time to time to develop teacher education programmes in our country, have all had their own educational and ideological agendas which have been reflected in the teacher preparation programmes they have drawn up. What is needed is a focused reflection about educational practices and how teaching can be reconceptualized so that it prepares citizens who are committed to the goals of education in a developing country. Critically reflective practice, if suitably conceptualized, can be a step forward towards that possibility. It is hoped that this study will provide some insight towards that conceptualization.

E. Limitations of the Study

As an interpretive study concerned with understanding meaning in a practical situation, and recognizing the historically contingent and problematic nature of meaning, this study does not claim to have a general predictive validity or research features that could be replicated to yield the same results. Neither is it claimed that the participants in this research are representative of the general population of student teachers, co-operating teachers and faculty consultants involved with teaching social studies everywhere, or that the results of this research would be generalizable to all of our experience of critical reflection. The study is generalizable to the extent that readers as participants in the educational enterprise also share a commitment to improving educational practices through critical reflection.

I do not attempt to secure the validity of the interpretation in this study through any scientific method that assures my objectivity as researcher. Rather, I have addressed the question of validity by following the hermeneutic principle of "distanciation" and "participation" (Ricoeur, 1983) in which the research conversations and the dialogue journals of the student teachers become texts that permit hermeneutic reflection. Distanciation in hermeneutic interpretation, however, does not remove our essential situatedness as participants acting to improve education. Through this participation the meaning of "critical reflection" is appropriated and we are able to arrive at a deeper understanding of the concept.

F. Definition of Terms

Technical rationality: In this study, technical rationality means the view that teaching problems can be solved by applying pre-specified techniques that teachers have learned beforehand in order to accomplish ends that have already been pre-determined.

Technical orientation: An orientation to teaching that derives from the technical rationality. Technical orientation views teaching as an applied science and teachers as the executors of the laws and principles of teaching.

Critical reflection: This term cannot be reduced to any closed or structured definition and it has come to mean many different things to many people. While remaining open to any meaning of critical reflection that might emerge in the research, its intended meaning in this study is still guided by Dewey's (1933) definition of reflective action as "the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it, and the further consequences to which it leads" (p.9). This definition implies a disposition to judge and question practice in a critical way that involves the examination of those aspects of practice that have been taken for granted and imparted as granted. Many current meanings of reflective practice do not include this critical element implicit in Dewey's definition of reflection even though some have advanced on Dewey's meaning to include whatever is considered as good and desirable about teaching. The theoretical, political and epistemological baggage inherent in some of these meanings itself needs to be subjected to critical reflection.

Critically reflective practice: Teaching that incorporates critical reflection as a crucial component of practice. It takes teaching beyond routinization in which the critical capacity of teachers has become desensitized as a result of repetition of their teaching activity. Critically reflective practice reflects constantly on teaching with a view to improving its performance.

Pedagogical responsibility: A responsible and thoughtful way of relating to children (students) in their educational becoming so that their powerful call and influence can transform our personal and professional lives (Van Manen, 1991). Teaching that is pedagogically structured is one that is grounded reflectively in the emancipatory norms towards which all education is oriented. Pedagogical responsibility is a way of engaging teaching that brings about this emancipation in learners.

G. Organization of the Study

This study is divided into six chapters. Chapter one introduces the study by placing it within the twofold backgrounds--the personal and the theoretical--from which the research has originated. This is followed by a statement of the major and subsidiary questions into which the study inquires into. The purpose, significance and the limitations of the study are also presented in this first chapter.

Because the call for critical reflection in teaching is a direct response to the dominant scientific-technological approach to teaching and curriculum, chapter two critically reviews this approach, placing it within its historical development and revealing its limitations which have led to the need for reconceptualization of practice. The various ways in which (critical) reflection in teaching have been understood and implemented in research and teacher education are also discussed. The intent here is not to present a catalogue of the theories and practices of reflective practice, but to provide a critical basis for searching for a deeper understanding of teaching.

Chapter three investigates the ways in which hermeneutics can be explored to reach this deeper understanding. It begins with a brief historical development of hermeneutics as inquiry into the human sciences and moves into a discussion of certain aspects of hermeneutics as they relate to the human interpretive act of understanding. Drawing upon Gadamer's (1984) example of conversation as a way of maintaining the hermeneutic priority and openness of the question, I explore conversation as a research mode in inquiring into the meaning of critical reflection in teaching.

In chapter four I have presented, in the form of themes and their interpretations, the meanings of critical reflection in teaching for the student teachers, teachers and faculty consultants who have participated in this study. In chapter five I reflect on these meanings, concentrating mainly on their relationship to critical reflection and pedagogy, and the limitations of language in speaking about this relationship.

In the final chapter, chapter six, I explore the application of the research, as a teacher educator and researcher, to improve pedagogical practices in Sierra Leone.

Chapter II

Mapping the Terrain of Critically Reflective Practice in Teaching

A. Introduction

In order to clarify further the purpose of the study, this chapter will attempt to grapple with certain key questions: What are the predominant understandings of, and orientations to teaching and teacher education? What are the limitations of these understandings? Why is there a need for a reconceptualization of teaching based on critical reflection on practice? What are the contemporary understandings of critically reflective practice in teaching? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these understandings for teaching and teacher education? Why is there a need to move beyond current understandings of critically reflective practice?

Because reflective practice is a response to the esconsced empirical/analytic approach which is the dominant tradition of teacher education and teaching, I will, in the first part of this chapter, attempt a developmental framework of this tradition, first placing it in a historical context for, as Gadamer (1984, p.251) reminds us, the fundamental condition of understanding in the human sciences is that it lets itself be addressed by tradition. We are only able to achieve transformative practice if we locate the origin of the dominant tradition, how it came to be dominant and the powerful forces that serve to maintain it. I will then attempt to reveal the inherent limitations of this approach to teaching, which have led to a call for reconceptualization (Pinar and Grumet, 1981) of curriculum, teaching and teacher education. In the second part of the chapter I will pursue a review of current understandings of reflective practice and the beliefs and assumptions that inhere in each. The intent here is to provide a framework of criticism, thus opening the way for rethinking critically reflective practice in teaching and teacher education.

B. The Empirical/Analytic Orientation

Historical Perspective

Throughout European tradition the image of the teacher was that of moral leader and religious disciplinarian (Castle, 1970). This was because the aim of education was to protect children from the evil temptations and false beliefs of this world. As well as being moral exemplars, teachers were also expected to possess the knowledge and abilities required to teach some basics and classics. The "good" teacher at the turn of the last century was the person who met the community ideal of a good citizen, good parent, someone who was honest, hardworking and considerate (Borich, 1988). Teachers were judged primarily on their goodness as people and secondarily on their classroom behaviour.

This image of the good and ideal teacher also holds true in the African tradition. In Sierra Leone, for example, the word "karmoh" (teacher) connotes not only someone who teaches his/her students the basic knowledge of his/her trade or discipline, but also a person who possesses good and desirable characteristics that the students could emulate. The teacher is someone the students and the whole community could look up to for leadership in moral conduct and a commitment to the vocation of teaching. For this he/she is highly respected. The first missionaries who came "to convert the natives" in the nineteenth century reflected this image of the teacher, as exemplified in Wynn's (1960) recollection of the missionary teacher:

> He (the teacher) was expected to be devoutly religious and of high moral character. This was the beginning of the tradition that still exists...that teachers or "schoolmasters", as they were called then, should maintain a standard of conduct above that expected of most people (p.89).

The role of the teacher as technician only became a part of teaching after Sierra Leone was formally colonized by Great Britain and the Western style of education was introduced in the country. At this time also in the United States of America (U.S.A.) technical teaching skills were beginning to be considered as a qualification of a teacher. One of the early proponents of technical skills in teaching was Johann Harbart (1776-1841) who, in his analysis of teaching, pointed out the need for teachers to have their own concept of education and some techniques of working with children. Horace Mann, who was one of the founding fathers of the first formal institution for the preparation of teachers in the U.S.A. in the nineteenth century, emphasized that, as well as subject knowledge and character, some teaching skills were to be a part of the qualification of teachers. In his report, Mann listed the following as part of the teacher's qualifications:

> One requisite is a knowledge of common-school studies. Teachers should have a perfect knowledge of the rudimental branches which are required by law to be taught in our schools.
> The next principal qualification in a teacher is the art of teaching...the ability to acquire, and the ability to impart, are wholly different talents.
> Experience has also proved that there is no necessary connection between literary competency, aptness to teach, and the power to govern and manage a school successfully. They are independent qualifications; yet a marked deficiency in any one of the three renders the others nearly valueless.
> (Horace Mann, "Report for 1840, cited in Saylor, 1976, p.22. Underlining mine).

In the 1950's and 1960's in both the U.S.A. and England, a new social order was emerging which was rooted in urbanization, industrialization and bureaucratic administration in every field including the school system which was undergoing a dramatic expansion in both the number of students and in real public expenditure on education. Carson (1984) notes that between 1950 and throughout the 1960's in the O.E.C.D. member countries, the number of secondary school students grew by almost 100% and that the percentage of GNP spent on education more than doubled. This unprecedented expansion marked the beginning of an increasing and active intervention by the state in educational matters. As politicians have become accountable to the public for the decisions they make regarding education, they in turn are asking educators to become responsible and accountable for their educational acts. Educators have come to respond to this demand for accountability by modelling teacher education on business and industry (which emphasize technical skills, bureaucratization and systems management) in order to produce visible outputs in terms of student learning outcomes.

Within such a technological perspective it is inevitable that the good, moral behaviour of the teacher, while rhetorically acknowledged, becomes unimportant in terms of teaching and teacher assessment. The definition of the "good" teacher has moved away from community and moral ideals, towards objective standards of performance which could be consistently applied across teachers and which educational institutions could use to train future teachers. A new direction in the research of teacher education has come to emphasize those specific teacher behaviours that have an impact on specific cognitive and affective behaviours of students. Borich (1988) notes that the term "good teaching" has changed to "effective teaching" and a large proportion of the study of teachers today have turned to research on the impact of "effective teaching" on students. Clusters of studies on teaching effectiveness which have come to be known as the "process-product" research (in the terminology of Mitzel, 1960 and Dunkin & Biddle, 1974) have yielded much information about those teacher behaviours that correlate with student learning behaviours--in other words, the relationship between the process of teaching and the product of learning. Proponents of this research (e.g. Gage, 1978; Soar & Soar, 1979; Brophy, 1983) believe that it can give a scientific basis to the art of teaching because teaching behaviours that are observable could be evaluated and serve as the basis for training teachers. Gage (1978) states:

> We do have some relationships between teacher behaviour and pupil achievement and attitudes on which a scientific basis for the art of teaching may be erected (p.35. Underlining mine).

Teacher effectiveness, which is equated with teacher competence, has come to be measured in the manner of the behavioural sciences.

The Curriculum Field

Because teaching cannot be considered independently of curriculum thought, the dramatic changes that have been taking place in teaching and teacher education have been a reflection of what is happening in the curriculum field. The accountability and productivity demand has led to the introduction of curriculum reforms that seek to make education, and the curriculum field in particular, more like a science. Scientific knowledge was gradually emerging as the best and purest form of knowledge because it was based on "objectivity, replicability and the ideal of hard, rather than soft data" (Apple, 1975, p.123). The "science" of education was expected to prove its worth and effectiveness through scientific testing.

The work of educational administrators like Joseph Rice and psychologists like E. L. Thorndike served to legitimize the scientific approach in education. Thorndike's work in measurement and testing in particular encouraged the view that educational achievements could be measured in a scientific way, and his contribution to the psychology of learning and individual difference was something that could be applied across the curriculum. Britzman (1991) captures well the discourse of these men with regard to curriculum and learning:

> ...learning, in their discourse, was depicted as the achievement of predetermined goals and reduced to a behaviouristic vision of stimulus and response; the problem of learning was considered a technical problem of management. Knowledge, broken down into discrete and measurable units, was arranged hierarchically in order to convert learning to observable outcomes. Borrowing from the methodology of the natural sciences and the discourses of scientific management in industry, a technical mode of rationality came to determine the dominant approach taken in understanding and organizing teaching and learning (p.30).

The works of Franklin Bobbit (1918) gave substance to the scientific movement in education in terms of curriculum planning and teacher education. In his widely read book, The Curriculum Bobbit described the scientific construction of the school curriculum, likening it to the method of scientific management developed within industrial management where the starting and the finishing points are unequivocably delineated.

Charters and Waples (1929) investigated "scientifically" the activities and traits of "good teaching" and in their study, The Commonwealth Teacher Training Study, they identified 1001 items of activities connected with good teaching, along with their definitions which covered 168 pages (Kliebard, 1975c, p.35).

Behind the works of Thorndike, Bobbit and Charters is the tacit structure of beliefs supporting the position that educational problems will be solved or controlled if we are more certain of our actions and their observable outcomes and that this can best be accomplished through a process of basing our forms of conception on those of the established behavioural sciences. In this belief, little thought is given to the fact that this approach to education gives the school the model of a factory, with the child being treated literally as an industrial product (Apple, 1975).

Ralph Tyler's Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction (1949) deserves a special mention in the discussion of the curriculum field. From the time of its inception into the curriculum field to this day, Tyler's book remains a pervasive influence on curricular thought in the U.S.A., England and Sierra Leone. Tyler identified four fundamental questions concerning curriculum and instruction which became otherwise known as the "Tyler Rationale". The four basic questions were:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

As we can see, the four questions frame curriculum and teaching questions in terms of technical management focusing around objectives, identification and organization of learning experiences to obtain the objectives, and ways of evaluating whether they have been achieved. Tyler's Rationale was seen as a rational planning model because it was able to specify the ends of an activity before engaging in it. Its linear approach to curriculum planning gave a top place to objectives in the hierarchy because, according to Tyler (1949, p.3), "all aspects of the educational programme are really means to accomplish basic educational purposes". Obviously concerned with assessment techniques that could be utilized to measure student behaviour after going through the "design specifications" (Kliebard, 1975c, p.45) of the curriculum, Tyler's model gave an important place to precise behavioural objectives in his rationale of curriculum and instruction. Behavioural objectives have been defined as "terminal behaviours expected from a student after the learning process, serving as a criterion by which the performance can be judged to be successful and the specific conditions that are necessary for the performance to occur satisfactorily" (Mager, 1962, quoted in Hur, 1986, p.37). Tyler's rationale found easy acceptance among curriculum planners because it exhibited some striking parallels between the technically oriented curriculum approach and business management. Kliebard (1975a) speaks to this link in his observation that the model offers a technique for rationally managing controversy:

> It is an eminently reasonable framework for developing a curriculum; it duly compromises between warring extremes and skirts the pitfalls to which the doctrinaire are subject (p.266).

Since its formulation, large efforts have been made by educationists to make objectives as clear as possible in order to provide clear goals towards which teachers and pupils can work so that curriculum results can be measured and evaluated easily. For example, Benjamin Bloom and associates (1956) have produced two taxonomies to aid the identification, description, classification and measurement of educational objectives and have come up with three broad domains : the cognitive which deals with intellectual abilities and operations; the affective which is concerned with emotions and commitments; the psycho-motor which covers the motor skill domain. Others (e.g., Hilda Taba, 1959) have elaborated on Tyler's model in order to cope with the complexity and untidiness of curriculum design and its interrelations with other elements both inside and outside the educational systems.

Pinar and Grumet, in their work on the reconceptualization of the curriculum, have often grounded their arguments in the criticisms raised by John Dewey and Boyd Bode regarding the unexamined and unreflective orientation to the instrumentalist rationality contained in the Tylerian approach to the curriculum but despite this effort, the model has largely remained the major determinant of curriculum theory and practice in the U.S.A.

Because the scientific/technological approach to curriculum development and teaching in England and Sierra Leone, as exemplified in the Tyler rationale, provided the impetus for this study, I will briefly discuss the rationale in the context of these two countries. First, I will discuss the parallels between the works of various curriculum theorists in England and Tyler's curriculum model in the U.S.A., locating their similarity within the development of the Industrial Revolution and the human capital approach to education in both these countries. Then, I will briefly explain the way in which developments in curriculum in these countries have continued to perpetuate the technological approach to curricular practices in Sierra Leone.

England

In addition to its great impact on education in the U.S.A., Tyler's model also provided the framework of curriculum development in England. The influence is most clearly seen in Wheeler's (1967) model of curriculum published in a book called Curriculum Process. Wheeler's model has five basic stages. The first stage consists of complex aims analysed into broad goals and specific classroom objectives which provide direction required for the selection of content, organization of learning experiences and evaluation methods. The similarity between this model and Tyler's is quite obvious.

Traces of similar influence is found in the work of J.Kerr, The Problem of Curriculum Reform in Changing the Curriculum (1968). Though Kerr did not detail a curriculum design, he does offer a model in which objectives, knowledge, school learning experiences and evaluation feature as prominent components. As he writes,

> For the purposes of curriculum design and planning it is imperative that the objectives should be identified first, as we cannot or should not, decide "what" or "how" to teach in any situation until we know "why" we are doing it (Kerr, 1968, p.21.).

Taylor's book, How Teachers Plan Their Courses, which was published in 1970 purported to put less emphasis on objectives and placed aims and objectives not at the first but at the third stage of course planning, after subject matter and the interests and attitudes of students. Although aims and objectives appear only at the third stage Taylor gives objectives tremendous weighting:

> The important thing is that objectives are integrated with full weight into this total scheme (curriculum development), that they should necessarily be the starting point (Taylor, quoted in Salia-Boa, 1987, p.68).

Tyler's model, however, has met with ceaseless criticism in England. Prominent among its critics is Sockett (1976) who has argued that the approach takes a restricted view of rationality in planning curriculum. Determining ends first, then determining means is rational in some contexts but not always in curriculum design. Sockett argues that ends and means cannot always be separated because certain ends pre-suppose certain means and vice versa. Also, he further argues, within the rational model, objectives are treated as given and not subjected to critical scrutiny to examine the beliefs, values and conceptions of those planning or influencing the objectives.

Others concerned with the humanities and the fine arts have also opposed Tyler's model. For example, Lawrence Stenhouse has argued that prespecifying objectives harms the very nature of the educational activities that students are supposed to engage in because such prespecification constrains meaningful education by closing off possibilities for individual and unique responses from students. Stenhouse (1975) has designed and pushed forward a "process model" which he sees as more appropriate for curriculum because it takes into account the contexts in which educational activities are carried out.

The process model is based on constructing curriculum by specifying content and principles of procedure based on contextual considerations rather than by prespecifying the expected outcomes in terms of objectives. Stenhouse used the model on the Humanities Curriculum Project which he directed and which is aimed at developing pupils' understanding of social situations and human acts and the controversial values which they raise.

The Industrial Revolution, economic development and curriculum thinking

The curriculum picture demonstrates a clear link between curriculum theorists in England (e.g., Wheeler) and those in the U.S.A.(e.g., Tyler) who were influenced by developments occurring after the early stages of the Industrial Revolution (1780-1850). At the beginning stages of the industrial revolution in both England and the U.S.A. schools were not seen as related to industrial or economic advancement. This was largely because the skills and knowledge required for the jobs in the first factories were not complex or demanding and were learned on the factory floor with no connection to schooling at all. There was indeed an expansion of schooling in England as a result of the encouragement of the Protestant Reformation which emphasized literacy for the population and as a result of the invention of the printing press but this had no link with economic development. In fact, schooling was sometimes criticized as detrimental to worker productivity, and by implication, to national interests as evidenced by one opposition voice to the expanding number of schools:

> Going to school in comparison to working is idleness, and the longer boys continue in this easy sort of life, the more unfit they will be when grown up for downright labour, both as to strength and inclination (Shipman, 1783, cited in Fagerlind & Saha, 1989, p.37).

However, as the pace of British industrialization quickened, the pressure to improve and expand the educational system increased. More demanding and complex industrial jobs required formal education through which the knowledge, skills and motivation for productive behaviour were imparted. This economic function became the major contribution of the school in England. With the passing of the Balfour Education Act in 1902 and the Butler Education Act in 1944, schooling at both primary and secondary levels became compulsory and even though education was now seen as a basic human right, schools were designed more to match the increasingly complex stratification structure of British industrial society than to meet the requirements of humane education.

Available evidence suggests that a similar relationship prevailed in the transformation of schooling in the U.S.A. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Trow (1961) writes:

> The changes in the occupational structure have raised the educational aspirations of large parts of the American population, and the educational system has been responsive to these higher aspirations (quoted in Fagerlind & Saha, 1989, pp.38-39).

The link made between formal education and economic development in England was clearly helping to shape the human capital approach to educational practices in the U.S.A. after the 1950's. Based on the works of Schulz (1961), Denison (1962) and Becker (1964) human capital theory rested on the assumption that formal education is highly instrumental and necessary to improve the production capacity of a population. In short the human capital theorists believed that an educated population is a productive population and their views have had a tremendous influence on, and indeed determined educational policies up to the present. Supported by fundings and publications of organizations such as UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank, the human capital approach to education has enjoyed an unquestioned faith in Western countries which has spread to developing countries. Japan, which after World War II and after much political, economic and social instability, utilized education deliberately to achieve industrialization and economic and social development, continues to be cited as a classic example of how education can make a direct contribution to economic growth and advancement. Japan is seen in the West as the success story of "education for economic development" such that there seems to be a general agreement between politicians and educational planners that education is a key change agent for the development of a society. Thus (even though there is little evidence to bear out this claim) since World War II the world has experienced an explosion in educational enrollments and expenditure both in developed and developing countries. This educational expansion has been followed by an increasing state invention in education through bureaucratized and controlled curricular practices that plan, implement and evaluate education in ways that are similar to the values of business culture. It has led to an unquestioned and widespread acceptance of the Tylerian model of technical curriculum development which lends itself well to the bureaucratic management of education. The aim is to control and rationalize education so that the best economic dividends are reaped from educational investments.

Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone curriculum matters have always been influenced by external agencies and other interested parties. These include the government in power, examination bodies, agencies like the International Development Agency (I.D.A.), UNESCO, the World Bank and various other aid donors. Because our past colonial ties inevitably link our education system with that of England, and because both England and the U.S.A. are major aid donors, especially towards education in Sierra Leone, our curricular practices have been shaped by in-coming influences from these two countries. At the same time that it was being widely accepted as the curriculum model in England and the U.S.A., Tyler's objective model which, as I have argued, translates easily into the technicist approach to curriculum, was gaining great acceptance in Sierra Leone and since the 1960's it has become "The Bible" for curriculum construction. With their strong belief in the human capital theory of education, Western donors have come to tie the aid they give to developing countries such as Sierra Leone to educational strategies which ensure direct and visible economic benefits. Within this scenario, educational planners have come to embrace the bureaucratic and technicist approach to education. Curriculum planning centres around measurable objectives and there is a strong belief in Sierra Leone among curriculum experts that curriculum development must be centred around Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives and that the job of curriculum development and evaluation should be to identify and measure learning objectives.

Implementing Tyler's model in Sierra Leone has, however, met with many constraints and some curriculum projects modelled on it have even failed to work. A good example of such failure is the social studies project called "Man in His Environment" (1972) which was financed by the I.D.A. and the British Council and planned by British and American consultants and a few Sierra Leonean curriculum experts.

Chief among the constraints to Tyler's model in Sierra Leone, and the major reason why the "Man in His Environment Project" failed, is that education in the traditional African system is not based on this model. In traditional African education there is no division between aims and objectives, content, teaching methodology and evaluating techniques. This means that educational ends are not separated from means as they are in Tyler's model. Aims, content, methodology and evaluation are all merged, which makes for education that is effective and functional to the society. As Salia-Bao (1987) argues it is important for curriculum policy makers to reflect on this observation because teachers from such a culture will find it difficult to implement Tyler's model. Researchers into curriculum development for Africa (e.g. Kajubi, 1973; Hawes,1976; Salia-Bao, 1987) have all argued for a model of curriculum that is more representative of our traditional educational model. Such a model could be arrived at by integrating elements of the situational model of curriculum development (Skilbeck, 1976) and the process model (Stenhouse, 1975). The situational model places curriculum design firmly within a cultural framework, viewing such design as a means whereby teachers modify and transform students' experiences by providing them insights into cultural values and interpretative framework. The situational analysis which precedes the development of the curriculum takes into account considerations such as the cultural resources available in the society, values and attitudes considered important and desirable, needs and goals of the society and parallel learning systems such as religious education and indigenous African education. The process model also advocates for a selection of content and principles of procedure (methods) based on the analysis of the situation in which the curriculum is designed, and not on the anticipated behaviours of the students. The approach is flexible, adaptable and open to interpretation and renewal in the light of changing circumstances. Such a model may be more effectively handled by teachers and students who are the users of the curriculum.

The literature on the dominant orientation to curriculum reveals a preoccupation with the scientific and technological management approach to education. The period after World War I in American history was fraught with an unquestioned faith in the methods of the natural sciences which was believed to increase productivity and maximize efficiency of the economy. To a large extent the curriculum field seemed to have been shaped by this spirit. In reaction to what was thought to be an education that was static, irrelevant to modern life and non-functional, curriculum reformers proposed a school programme "that was perpetually innovative, directly related to an ongoing world of affairs and supremely utilitarian in orientation" (Kliebard, 1975a, p.40). The scientific/technological approach to curriculum management was practical and, therefore, responsive to this demand. The approaches to teaching, teacher preparation and learning within this perspective can be very easily imagined.

C. **Making the Empirical/Analytic Orientation Problematic**

In the first part of this chapter I have attempted to sketch a historical analysis of the origins of the empirical/analytic approach which emphasizes performance objectives, instrumentality and technicism in curriculum development and teaching, and which currently provides the dominant framework for pedagogy. The dominance of the approach has, however, not rendered it immune from extensive criticism from several directions. Stenhouse (1975) and Apple (1975) have argued that such a rationalized and technical view of curriculum and teaching is rooted in a conceptualization of teaching as the achievement of clearly defined goals which are reducible to technological means of address. While, in science, goals are sought-after answers to questions that take specified forms and operationalized statements about measurable phenomena (Stanley, 1978) the goals of teaching and education cannot be so easily reduced. Any such conceptualization of teaching and education carries within it a profoundly technicist assumption that all educational problems are technologically solvable. Other critics have also argued that by limiting teaching to observable "terminal behaviours" the real meaning of education as on-going possibilities for learners is removed in favour of immediate, measurable end-points. R.S. Peters puts the matter very strongly:

> Education...can have no ends beyond itself. Its value derives from principles and standards implicit in it. To be educated is not to have arrived at a destination; it is to travel with a different view. What is required is not feverish preparation for something that lies ahead, but to work with precision, passion and taste at worthwhile things that lie to hand (Quoted in Kliebard, 1975b, p.46).

Within the technological view of pedagogy teacher preparation focuses on those teaching skills and techniques that enable the teacher to control student behaviours in such a way that they lead to the achievement of objectives that have been specified and developed *a priori* by educational "experts". The role of the teacher is thus reduced to what Aoki (1984b) calls the "thing" in curriculum and teaching because he or she is only there to implement curriculum that has been planned and developed by other people and his/her competence is delimited to what is quantifiable and measurable.

Proponents of the "scientific management" adaptation to teaching see the approach as a science of educational understanding which is objective, neutral and provides authoritative guide in the preparation of teachers. However, educators for critical consciousness (e.g., Toh, 1990; Freire, 1970) have strongly argued that no education is neutral or objective and that the attempt to adapt a scientific management to the field of education reflects a particular value system--that of imposing the logic of corporate, technocratic efficiency upon schools and educational institutions to reduce education to the production of graduates as "certified commodities to be traded in the employment market place" (Toh,1990, p.12). According to Toh, this contradicts the authentic meaning of education as the nurturing of the minds and spirits of human beings.

Giroux (1983) makes some important distinctions in his discussion of the effects of the technical rationality in education:

> Its interest is in constructing law-governed regularities; knowledge is viewed as neutral and is canonized as fact; behaviour is equated with outcomes that can be predicted and controlled; and the educator is viewed as objective (pp.176-178).

Britzman (1991) in elaborating on Giroux's distinctions contends that, like the goals of industry, the technological view of education has been institutionalized in an attempt to,

> maintain an orderly and efficient society necessary to the underlying values of social control. Such a vision is based upon repression; the individual's potential to become something other than what has been predicted is diminished (p.31).

One only needs to look at education in British colonies during the colonial period to confirm Britzman's point. For example, Bacchus (1974) describes colonial education in British Guiana in these words:

> The curriculum was foreign and aimed at preparing obedient citizens. It was to teach them (the students) how not to be critical and question social (dis)order...(p.45).

Questioning is a central aspect of all acts of knowing and it is implicit in our experiences in order to inquire into the world and make sense of it (Gadamer, 1984). A curriculum practice that does not allow questioning does not foster meaningful education because it closes possibilities for students to explore beyond the given.

In Africa, the focus of teaching has been examinations because examinations secure credentials that create access to jobs and, sometimes, status in the society. As such teacher education focuses on only the techniques that make the subject matter well-known in order for students to pass examinations. Critical inquiry skills which promote creativity and critical thinking in students is largely ignored in teacher education as teachers are trained to be proficient in what Duminy (1973) refers to as "didactic materialism", that is, the teachers give the materials to be learned to the students who are expected to memorize and reproduce them during examinations, without any consideration given to the way the material is learned or known. Butler (1962) typifies the kind of teaching situation which develops from such teacher training as one in which:

> Learners are not, as a rule, given the opportunity to do things for themselves. They are told or made to feel that their opinions are worthless; that they should follow, not lead; listen and remember, not work things out for themselves (p.119).

If it does nothing else, the technological orientation to teaching, especially as understood and practised in Sierra Leone, separates teaching from critical reflection, making it impossible for teachers to problematize practice and question the meaning of education in the deep sense.

But despite these limitations, the ideals of the scientific/technological orientation persist as the predominant value underlying the research and practice of teaching and teacher education. The certainty and control inherent in the approach provides a shield against digging beneath the surface terrain of teaching for fear of turning up difficulties which lie beyond control and pat answers (Carson, 1991). While a huge amount of criticism has emerged against the perception of teaching as a science, few critics can deny the importance of technical proficiency as an integral component of teacher education and teaching. Among other things, technical proficiency is responsive to what Zeichner & Teitelbaum (1982) refer to as "the dominant survival-oriented concerns and perspectives" of student teachers and to ignore such concerns is to ignore the reality of learning how to teach. But as these authors also remind us, technical proficiency in teaching is to be valued only for its ability to bring about desired ends, not as an end itself. Techniques, then, must be seen as pertaining to how things are done in schools and must, therefore, be superceded by the more basic consideration of the reasons why they are done (Zeichner & Teitelbaum, 1982).

In response to changing times where clear and unambiguous technical solutions are no longer sufficient in addressing educational problems, there has been a renewed interest to prepare teachers who are able to bring about change and what is educationally appropriate through thoughtful practice. This has led to an interest in an orientation to practice that may be loosely termed "reflective practice" in teaching.

D. **The Call for a Reconceptualization of Teaching Based on Reflective Practice**

Since the 1980's teacher education has suffered intense and unabating criticism from both within educational circles and the public at large. Recently many scholarly papers have emerged that are concerned with a "reconceptualization" (Pinar, 1975; Pinar & Grumet,1981; Aoki, 1984b) of teacher education, calling for a critical questioning of current curricular and teaching practices and the possibility of transformative modes of teacher education.

In the U.S.A. the Holmes Group Report (1986) and the Carnegie Forum (1986) have provided the impetus for criticizing the curriculum and practice of teacher education based on applied scientific and technological approaches. Reformers are now advocating a more autobiographical, interpretive and critical engagement of curriculum and teaching. Although a close examination of the Holmes Group Report reveals that its meaning of "quality education" is rooted in the prevailing instrumental and technological orientation to educational practices, it does recognize the crucial importance of teachers in any educational change:

> Curriculum plans, instructional materials, elegant classrooms and even...intelligent administrators cannot overcome the negative effects of weak teaching or match the positive effects of positive teaching....The entire formal and informal curriculum of the school is filtered through the minds and hearts of classroom teachers, making the quality of school learning dependent on the quality of teachers (Holmes Group Report, 1986, p.23).

The Holmes Group Report has been seen by educational reformers like Pinar and Grumet as an impetus for critiquing the curriculum and practice of teacher education as based on applied scientific and technological approaches. These reformers are advocating for a more autobiographical and critical engagement of educational discourse.

In Canada, various teacher education institutions are exploring the possibility of alternative approaches to teacher preparation. For example, the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, after deliberating over several models, has come up with "reflection-in-action" and "critically reflective teaching" as alternatives to the existing mode of teacher preparation. Although these alternatives still require "further exploration of both theory and practice", they are a marked deviation from the technicist orientation that at present imbibes teacher preparation at the university.

The call for reconceptualization has not been limited to North America alone. Recently in Sierra Leone, there have been calls from the government to consider ways of overhauling teacher education. The calls have been mainly a reaction to the failure of the present educational system to achieve the goals of economic development and social mobility. At the National Conference on Curriculum and Teacher Education held in April,1989, the Chief Education Officer said, among other things,

> There is need to strive towards a different kind of education for this country if we are to rely on education as the major road to our development and if our children are to grow up as responsible, self-fulfilled citizens. To this end, a more realistic and relevant type of school curriculum and teacher education programme have to be constructed, not necessarily to replace, but to complement the existing ones (Part of the speech of the Chief Education Officer of Sierra Leone at the National Conference of Curriculum and Teacher Education, held 16th April, 1989).

This is an urgent cry for change in educational policy, especially teacher education in Sierra Leone. After almost thirty years of independence from Britain it is now being realized that the instrumentally oriented colonial system of education, which we inherited and which we have continued to practise, is not practical for a developing nation. There is need for another approach to educating young people, one that embraces educational practices in a critical and thoughtful way.

Driven by this need for reconceptualizing and reorienting education, educators of diverse backgrounds have proposed that the entire programme of teacher education must be refashioned in a manner that will develop beginning teachers who possess the qualities and intellectual capacities that undergird reflective practice (Zeichner & Liston, 1987; Taylor, 1990). Zeichner & Liston (1987) for example, have called for "an approach to teacher education that will cultivate among student teachers both the disposition and the capacity to reflect critically not only on instructional techniques but also all facets of teaching, including the origins, purposes and consequences of their actions, as well as...the material and ideological constraints and encouragements embedded in the classroom, school and societal contexts in which they work" (p.23-24). This is evident of critical reflection which requires that teachers' actions are not routinely guided by tradition and authority, or "by a taken-for-granted definition of reality in which problems, goals and the means for their solution become defined in particular ways" (Grant & Zeichner, 1984, p.3).

But how has "critical reflection" been understood and practised? Although a large number of educators agree that "critical reflection" must become an important component of teacher preparation, the term has been understood and interpreted in different ways. In the rest of this chapter I will review the various ways in which reflective practice and "critical reflection" in teaching and teacher education have been understood. But first, to contextualize "critical reflection" I will attempt to give brief and current developments in what educators have come to refer to as "reflective practice" within which "critical reflection" in teaching is embedded.

E. **Reflective Practice-- Recent Developments**

The notion of "reflective practice" in education is not new. It can be traced back to John Dewey (1904, 1933) who warned teacher educators against too mechanical a focus on teaching methods in the preparation of student teachers because he feared that "immediate skill may be got at the cost of power to go on growing" (1904, p.15). In Dewey's view teacher education should be pointed towards making the professional teacher "thoughtful about his work in the light of principles rather than induce in him a recognition that special methods are good and certain other methods are bad"(1904/1964, p.22). This view sharply contradicts the competency and performance based approaches to teacher education which focuses on only those teaching techniques that yield "competent" performance and in which "competence" is judged simply in terms of technical skills. For Dewey and the progressives teachers had a responsibility and obligation to question the taken-for-granted in education through inquiry and reflection and this could not be achieved through a technological orientation to practice.

More recently, Donald Schon's thinking and writings on reflective practice in the professions have revived and aroused a great deal of interest in the concept of "reflection" in teacher education (Grimmet & Erickson, 1988; Munby & Russell, 1989). More and more, educators are becoming aware of the need for teachers to reflect upon their practices if they are to make informed judgments about these practices and about the meaning and purpose of education. Schon sees educational discourses and practices as dominated by the technical rationality in which the teacher is regarded as an instrumental problem solver who uses technical means to solve teaching problems in the manner of applied science. He sees the problem with practice in this epistemology as a division between theory and practice where theory is seen as something to be learned first and then applied to practice. In Schon's thinking this relation between theory and practice should be reconsidered:

> We should start not by asking how to make better use of research-based knowledge but by asking what we can learn from a careful examination of artistry, that is, the competence by which practitioners actually handle indeterminate zones of practice--however that competence may relate to technical rationality (1987, p.13).

Calderhead (1989) has made a distinction between various aspects of "reflection". He distinguishes between the precondition of reflection (context, attitudes), the process of reflection (deliberation, reflection in action), the content of reflection (theories, values) and the product of reflection (good teaching, empowerment, transformation). As a consequence of these distinctions "reflective practice" in teaching has come to have quite diverse and sometimes confusing characteristics.

Bullough (1989), therefore, suggests that in order to prevent the term from becoming meaningless, thus weakening its potential to make a genuine contribution to educational reform, a framework for reflectivity must be constructed consisting of a statement of philosophy and values. But, in the light of the considerable disagreement among educators about philosophies and values to be aimed at in teacher education, it could be argued that Bullough's suggestion could lead to vapid, liberal pluralism and relativity. To minimize the difficulty Bullough poses four questions which could help the process of producing a conceptual framework of reflectivity. These are:

What is meant by reflectivity?
What are the purposes of reflectivity?
What are programme participants to be reflective about?
What curriculum is most likely to enhance reflectivity?

Acknowledging the slippery nature of the concept of reflectivity, it is not easy to come up with a clear-cut meaning of reflectivity. Perhaps, as Bullough suggests, one needs to examine two major functions of reflectivity that programme developers need to be aware of : an end to be sought and a means for achieving the end.

The purpose of reflectivity has called attention to a fundamental difficulty with reflectivity as an aim in teacher education. Bode (1937) argued over fifty years ago that educational practice needs to be grounded in social theory if it is not to be trivial and undesirable. This would mean that an articulated social vision of the community desiring to foster reflectivity plays an important role in drawing up any curriculum of a reflective teaching programme. The major issue here would appear to relate to questions involving proposed solutions to perceived problems and the desirability of these solutions by the society.

What programme participants are to be reflective about requires an investigation of the legitimate problems deserving of teacher education. These could be technical problems relating to the type of teaching skills and techniques to develop and how (Cruickshank, 1981), or moral ethical issues relating to equality and justification of educational practices (Zeichner & Teitelbaum, 1982; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). Such questions, as Tom (1985) argues, reflect an ontology, a way of being in the world.

With Schon's works (1983; 1987; 1988) providing the impetus to return to reflective practice in teaching and following Bullough's thesis on the necessity of conceptualizing a framework for the theory and practice of reflective teaching, teacher educators are currently coming up with a large and diverse body of theoretical and practical accounts of how the construct of "reflective practice" might be utilized in teacher education. These accounts reveal little shared meaning of "reflective practice" or what constitutes a reflective teaching programme. In such a situation it becomes necessary to create some clarificatory framework in order to understand more clearly the usage of the term and the nature of the assumptions underlying the various programmes that have emerged as reflective teaching programmes. I have attempted to make such clarification by drawing upon the work of the German critical social scientist, Jurgen Habermas, who, in his book, Knowledge and Human Interests (1972) makes three distinctions related to the knowledge interests of the human world. Habermas's work (1972) is particularly relevant here because the literature on reflective practice reveals that Habermas's knowledge orientations run through them. I, therefore, consider it necessary to include here a summary of Habermas's three knowledge constitutive interests.

F. Knowledge and Human Interests (Jurgen Habermas,1972)

The way in which individuals relate to the world is manifold and, as Aoki (1985) argues, the quality of the relationships and the activities people undertake depend on the way they orient to the world. Habermas indicates that this orientation to the world determines the type of knowledge that people produce; in other words, different kinds of knowledge are shaped by the particular human interest that they serve. Habermas refers to his theory of knowledge as a theory of "knowledge-constitutive interests". He rejects the idea that the human activity through which knowledge is produced is an objective, neutral and disinterested act as the natural sciences posit. On the contrary, Habermas argues that knowledge is not detached from everyday concerns and that it is always constituted on the basis of interests shaped by historical and social conditions. Without the whole range of needs and desires incorporated in the human species human beings would have no interest in acquiring knowledge and there would, therefore, be no possibility of knowledge (Carr & Kemmis, 1983, p.133). For Habermas, then, knowledge production is motivated by the natural needs and interests of human beings.

Habermas outlines three knowledge-constitutive interests which he labels the "technical", the "practical" and the "emancipatory".

The first of these, the technical, is an orientation to material well-being, governed by an interest in producing technical or "empirical-analytic" (Aoki, 1985) understandings which enhance efficiency, certainty and predictability. The interest is in seeking to acquire nomological knowledge that takes the form of causal explanations which lead to instrumental control of objects in the world. Inherent in this orientation to knowledge production is a technical interest in the utilization of predictive knowledge to enhance technology and to control or modify human behaviour. The mode of research that produces this type of knowledge assumes a detached and objective stance that distances the researcher's own subjectivity from the research process. The knowledge produced is detached and objective enough to be applied as generalizations.

Habermas's second knowledge-constitutive interest, the practical, is oriented towards communication and is governed by a practical interest in understanding others in social situations. Habermas draws upon the hermeneutic tradition of "verstehen" and argues that in order to understand our world in which we live with others, it is necessary to grasp the social meanings that constitute social reality. "It is the understanding of meaning and not controlled observation which provides access to the facts." (Habermas, 1973, p.293). The "verstehen" method produces knowledge which serves a practical interest in that it leads to an interpretive understanding which guides and informs our practical judgments in our relationship with others. Because individuals give personal meanings to the situations they experience and because people interpret the same events in different ways, research that is conducted to arrive at practical knowledge engages a situational, interpretive inquiry. The focus is on deep structures of personal meanings that come from the way in which the individual experiences and appropriates the social world rather than on empirical, objective facts and law-like generalizations. The researcher brings his/her own subjectivity to bear upon the research and enters into a dialectical relationship with the subjectivity of others, thus arriving at knowledge that is based on dialogue, communication and interpretive understanding.

But Habermas maintains that though interpretive knowledge is essential in order to understand situational meaning, it is not an adequate method for addressing the task of emancipation of human beings. This may be due to the fact that the subjective understandings of people may in themselves be deformed by objective contexts that have been created by relations of domination which limit the possibilities of individuals to alter these contexts. While the empirical-analytic method of the natural sciences concerns itself only with facts and their explication, leaving intact a given social reality, the interpretive approach does not render the nature of life as problematic or give it a critical basis.

Because they have divorced themselves from critical self-reflection these approaches, according to Habermas, are, therefore, inadequate vehicles for realizing social emancipation. Habermas, consequently, puts forward a critical social science that has an emancipatory orientation as his third knowledge-constitutive interest.

Critical social science is based on Marx's "ideology critique" through which the individual engages criticism of dominant ways of thinking and acting in order to liberate himself or herself. Habermas argues that under the sway of ideological systems, people are prevented from correctly understanding their situations and come to accept in a passive way distorted versions of social reality. Through critique of such ideologies distortions are revealed and a reconstruction of reality is engaged. Habermas draws upon the self-reflective methods of psychoanalysis through which individuals are made aware of those processes which prevent them from understanding their situations in a correct way. Through critical reflection Habermas believes that individuals could come to uncover and make explicit hidden intentions, reconstruct their social realities and free themselves from relations of domination.

Central to Habermas's emancipatory paradigm is action guided by new insights gained through critical reflection. For Habermas, reflection without action is an insufficient condition for liberation. Critical social science, therefore, goes beyond critique into "critical praxis" which is a form of practice that combines critical reflection with the political determination to act to transform social realities.

Research within the critical emancipatory orientation is interested in questioning the descriptive accounts given by both the empirical-analytic researcher and the researcher using the "verstehen" method in order to reveal their hidden assumptions. The researcher mutually engages himself or herself and the research participants in a process of critical reflection so that new questions emerge which will lead to more reflection (Aoki,1985).

Habermas's attempt at developing this kind of critical social science has not gone without criticism. A few of the criticisms will be discussed in my review of the critical orientation to reflective practice.

G. Current Understandings and Orientations to Reflective Practice

Adapting Habermas's thesis on the relationship between knowledge and human interests to the various orientations to reflection and reflective practice in the literature, and drawing upon the work of Grimmet et al (1990) who have also made some attempt to create a classificatory framework for the literature, I arrived at three categorical orientations. I did this mainly by examining the way in which knowledge is viewed in the literature in terms of its contribution to teacher education. For example, is knowledge seen as controlling practice? Is it seen as informing practice through an interpretive process or is knowledge seen as leading to a reconstruction of social reality through critical reflection? The three orientations that emerged from my analysis were the following:

a. Reflection as instrumental mediation of action (Grimmet et al, 1990)
b. Reflection as practical/interpretive action
c. Reflection as critical praxis

a. Reflection as Instrumental Mediation of Action

This orientation views reflection as a process that leads to mediated action in which research findings and theoretical formulae about education are put into practice in the classroom. The purpose of reflection is instrumental in that the reflective process is used to help teachers replicate in the classroom those practices that empirical research has found to be effective (Grimmet et al, 1990). Knowledge in this orientation is used to control and direct practice and such knowledge comes from research findings, journal articles and tested theories about education rather than from actual situations of classroom practice. Habermas would refer to this mode of knowledge as technological knowledge which is derived from external sources, reflected upon and then applied to practice in an instrumental way.

Cruickshank's (1985) work on reflective practice exemplifies this instrumental orientation. He sees reflective teaching as "helping prospective teachers to gain knowledge of theory and then learn to apply it under controlled laboratory conditions" (1985, p.705). In his view student teachers would have to be exposed to particular learning theories or teaching techniques and then asking them to apply this knowledge in teaching and reflecting upon such application. The exercise is very similar to micro-teaching sessions in which one member of a small group is asked to teach a lesson that is observed and then later discussed by peers in this group.

Cruickshank's instrumental approach to reflective practice has met with a tremendous amount of criticism ranging from the view that this form of controlled laboratory exercise is mere simulation that is far removed from actual classroom situations, to the criticism that it is built on a diminished understanding of reflection which conceptualizes teaching as nothing more than a narrow set of skills (Gore, 1987). Implicit in Cruickshank's orientation to reflection is a basic interest in controlling teaching through the application of techniques which have been already identified as effective in the classroom. The approach fits the linear-expert dominated model (McDonald, 1975) which is rooted in the behavioural objectives approach to curriculum design and the scientific-technological approach to teaching. The limitations of these approaches to teaching and curriculum have already been extensively discussed earlier in this chapter. Here I will focus only on the way in which a narrow technological approach to reflective practice divorces the technical acts of teaching from any critical reflection upon teaching or the wider context in which it occurs.

To begin with, when reflective practice is conceptualized as a narrow set of teaching skills, the focus is on "how-to-do-it" questions involving practical skills, leaving out "why-do-it" questions (Gore, 1987) that involve critical reflection on the rationales underlying teaching behaviours. The wider political and social contexts in which teaching takes place are left unexamined, leading to an uncritical acceptance and engagement of what Grant & Zeichner (1984) refer to as the fixed and recurring patterns of organization and behaviour that currently prevail in schools and classrooms. As Beyer (1987) argues, such a situation renders the school as a model of accepted practice rather than being made an object of analysis that could bring about possible changes. Knowledge comes to be presented to students as having a fixed meaning divorced from any social and historical construction deserving of questioning and critical reflection. When knowledge is presented to students this way, they come to lose their ability to understand and transform the social and human interaction that maintains knowledge. An even more deleterious effect is that knowledge presented as static deintellectualizes students and effectively cuts them off from any power to take a lead in addressing problems in their work places or assume a directive role in the formation of their professional identities. As Taylor (1990) argues, such de-intellectualization is a key element in the de-professionalization of teachers.

The position of the teacher within a technical orientation to reflective practice also deserves some comment. When there is an over-reliance on an across-the-board scientific application of research findings and educational theories to classroom situations, the knowledge of the teacher which derives from the actual practice situation is grossly devalued in favour of knowledge from external authorities. The teacher's position is thus clearly delineated as implementer of experts' ideas thereby reinforcing his/her role as a cog in the wheel of curriculum engineering.

Within the perspective of reflection as instrumental mediation, teacher education focuses on developing specific teaching skills in response to immediate cognitive problems in the students without much reflection on the curricular context within which the skills are employed or the ends towards which they are directed. In the process, pedagogical considerations as they relate to the life-world of students, their experiences and individual differences are devalued in favour of instrumental procedures that are seen to work regardless of their own harmful effects. It is this abandonment of reflection on teaching acts, save for the extent to which it relates to technique, that has been the butt of the criticism against the technical orientation to reflective practice. Its detractors have argued that reflection should focus on the ends and outcomes of teaching, especially as these relate to the students who are put in our charge as educators, as well as matters of technical proficiency which are the means to bring about these ends.

b. **Reflection as Practical/interpretive Action**

Knowledge with a practical interest provides an interpretive understanding that informs and guides our practical judgments. Reflection that is oriented towards a practical interest involves considerations of educational events in context and reflective activity includes anticipation of the consequences following from different lines of action. It involves pre-active reflection (Van Manen, 1991) through which we deliberate about possible alternatives and their outcomes before deciding on courses of action. In this orientation, though research knowledge and other sources of external knowledge are utilized in the classroom, the appropriation and utilization of such knowledge are interpreted and mediated by a situational understanding of the context of the actual practice situation. The practitioner uses an "informed eclecticism" (Schwab, 1969) in his/her practice and knowledge in this deliberative, reflective process is used to inform, rather than to direct or control practice.

Those who subscribe to this view of reflective practice are distinguished by the attention they pay to the importance of reflecting on events in actual contexts. By so doing, one is able to deliberate among competing views and examine each in the light of the consequences of the action it entails. It is a view of reflection that is attentive to practitioners' knowledge because it is derived from practice situations. It is also mindful of the personal meanings of individuals which come from the way they experience social reality. Nandy (1990) and Rahnema (1990) subscribe to this orientation to reflection. In their view reflecting about particular events in context means deliberating about incoming ideas about education and teaching into Third World countries and examining each idea in the light of its consequences for these countries. Connelly & Clandinin (1988) and Bullough & Gitlin (1988) also subscribe to this view. For them any programme aimed at developing reflective practitioners should encourage the view that novice teachers are as much creators as consumers of knowledge and, therefore, their experiences must be honoured and serve as a central focus of study.

From the foregoing, we can see that the practical/interpretive approach to reflection does give an important place to teachers' meanings and experiential knowledge, thus confronting the view that teachers are simply consumers of knowledge. But missing from this approach is a critical reflection on the understandings of individuals and upon actual practice and theoretical conceptions of practice (Carson, 1984). It fails to account for the way teachers' understandings are produced by the regime of truth that has been constructed by teacher educators, researchers and others whose accounts count as truth. By omitting any critical insight into the situatedness of teachers' thinking, reflection becomes nothing more than a therapy incapable of confronting unjust and hierarchical structures in schools.

c. **Reflection as Critical Praxis**

Literature which falls under the critical orientation to reflection understands that concepts about curriculum, students and teaching are social constructions. Reflection is necessary to uncover the ideologies underpinning these constructions so that teaching may participate in reforming society. This perspective derives from a critical theoretical stance which emphasizes a focus on power relations between the school and society and within the school culture. Through critical examination and reflection on schools and how they function to sustain or reproduce existing structures of domination in society one is able to arrive at new insights that could serve as basis for transformation and emancipation (Apple, 1979, 1982; Wexler, 1982; Giroux, 1986).

The source of reflection in this orientation lies in the context of the action setting as well as in the practical application of personal knowledge. The mode of knowing could be described as dialectical because past understandings are reframed and reconstructed by practitioners in such a way as to generate fresh applications of phenomena in practice situations (Grimmet et al, 1990).

In terms of reflective practice, the works of Zeichner (1982; 1983; 1987) is an example of this critical orientation to reflective practice. His reflective practitioner is a historically and socially conscious actor interested in making teaching and schooling more rational and just. Zeichner (1987) sees inquiry-oriented programmes as basic tenets of teacher education fostering a critical orientation which does not accept single ideas or institutional practices without question and which as well seeks alternatives. This is evident of critical reflection and, as an approach to teacher preparation, it is counterposed to the three other approaches described by him: the "behaviouristic" which stresses specific and observable teaching skills identified in advance, the "personalistic" which focuses on the development of the psychological maturity of the teacher, and the "traditional craft" which emphasizes the accumulated wisdom of experienced practitioners.

For Zeichner, critical reflection also includes an awareness that in addition to guiding students to acquire knowledge, teaching also has ethical, moral consequences and those charged with the responsibility of this vocation should possess the disposition to reflect on their teaching behaviours and the consequences these behaviours have for their students. The works of Clandinin & Connelly (1988), Bullough & Gitlin (1988) and Henderson (1992) also find much in common with Zeichner's critical approach.

Those who view critical reflection as critical pedagogy (Freire, 1973; Giroux, 1983; Cherryholmes, 1988; McLaren, 1989) are driven by their belief in the power of the human being to understand and reconstruct his/her experiences of domination and repression both in the school setting and in the wider society. Seen as critical pedagogy, critically reflective practice means engaging a critical discourse in the classroom, reworking existing forms of schooling and educational theories and practices, contesting the terrains on which they develop and appropriating from them radical potentialities they might contain. From this perspective, the reflective practitioner is capable of intelligent reflection on society, knowledge and the self, and also attentive to the possibilities of human agency to bring about social transformation. Such a teacher is the "transformative intellectual" (Wexler, 1985; Giroux, 1986; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1987) who educates students to struggle within ongoing relations of power to envision and promote unrealized possibilities in the wider society.

Of particular relevance to this study is a group of Third World writers who also understand critical reflection as reconstruction of experience. Pennycooke, (1990), Kothari (1987), Nandy (1990) and Rahnema (1990) are examples of scholars whose colonial experience has influenced their view of critical reflection as an engagement of a "diremptive/redemptive" project (Pennycooke, 1990) involving the intellectual in transformative action aimed, on the one hand, at opposing the hegemony of dominant discourses and, on the other, identifying, producing and legitimating those knowledges and cultures which have been subjugated. According to Kothari (1990) the reflective intellectual should have,

> ...a listening intellect instead of the usual pontificating one with which the intellectual merely hands out specific solutions....Such an intellectual has a pluralistic conception of intellectual tasks, instead of a monolithic, universalizing and unifying model that applies everywhere (if it does not work somewhere, the fault is of the people or of tradition or of politics). Reflective intellectuals identify with the victims of history, are moved by passion and commitment (instead of cold "scientific" analysis without a sense of personal involvement) (P.290).

It is clear from the foregoing that subscribers to the emancipatory view of critical reflection are guided by the belief that through critique, we are able to challenge what Foucault (1980) refers to as "regimes of discourses " or conventionally taken-for-granted ways of understanding, speaking and acting. The orientation has a powerful pull on anyone working towards changing his/her situation. However, the implementation of its own critical insights to bring about emancipation is highly problematic for critical theory itself. For example, Ellsworth (1989), writing about her experience as a white middle class woman and professor engaged with a diverse group of students developing an anti-racist course at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has this to say:

> As I began to live out and interpret the consequences of how discourses of "critical reflection", "empowerment", "student voice", and "dialogue" had influenced my conceptualization of the goals of the course and my ability to make sense of my experiences in the class, I found myself struggling against (struggling to unlearn) key assumptions and assertions of current literature, and straining to recognize, name and come to grips with the crucial issue of classroom practice that critical pedagogy cannot and will not discuss (p.303).

The approach has also been criticised as self-contradictory (Cherryholmes, 1988) because it cannot eliminate the structural conditions necessary for its constitution. In addition, the ability of any social structure fighting to promote critical discourse without itself turning out to be oppressive has also been questioned by certain critics (e.g. Bernstein, 1979).

H. **Reflections on these Orientations**

As can be seen from this review of the orientations, "reflective practice" and the way teacher educators might encourage critical reflection in their students have been understood in very different ways. Tom (1985) plausibly contends that the confusion that arises is with respect to what is defined as the " arena of the problematic". While there is a view that to make teaching problematic is to raise doubts about what, under ordinary circumstances, appears to be effective and wise practice, the object of that problematizing (or the object of reflective action) is by no means agreed upon. Conceptualization and practice of "reflective practice" have, therefore, ranged from a narrow set of technical skills in teaching, through an interpretive and practical view, to a critical theoretical orientation.

At this point there is need to step back and rethink the question of what "critically reflective practice" actually means. In this rethinking of the question, we need to move away from these objectifications of the concept and see it more as the lived experience of student teachers and others involved with the process of student teaching. It is hoped that by researching into critical reflection in practice as it is lived and experienced by the participants in this study, we will arrive at a deeper understanding of the meaning of reflective practice in teaching.

Chapter III

Inquiring into the Meaning of Critical Reflection in Teaching

Developing a Research Orientation

A. Introduction

In the previous chapter I attempted a critical examination of the empirical/analytic approach which is the dominant approach to teaching and curriculum, and I argued that the turn towards reflective practice in teaching and teacher education is rooted in the desire to question this dominant approach and to come to a fuller understanding of teaching. I also attempted to show that even though the call for reflective practice reflects this common desire, divergent orientations to both the concept and practice of reflective practice have emerged, so that there is no common understanding of what constitutes reflection in the research and practice of teaching. Drawing upon Habermas's (1972) three knowledge-constitutive interests to analyse current understandings of reflective practice, I was able to arrive at three different orientations to reflection and critical reflection in practice. These were: reflection as instrumental mediation of action, reflection as practical/interpretive action and reflection as critical praxis. Each of these orientations was examined and it was revealed that while each is a worthy approach to the practice and research of teaching, there are inherent weaknesses that make it an inadequate approach to teacher preparation. The technological orientation was shown to be attentive to the technical and skills problems in teaching but fails to take teaching beyond this narrow technical view to include critical reflection on the ends towards which the techniques are employed and the wider contexts of teaching in which they are applied. The practical/interpretive orientation takes into account the interpretive understandings of practitioners in the practice situation but does not account for the ways in which these understandings are in themselves produced. The critical orientation addresses this problem by proposing that through critical reflection on situations and actions, the ways in which individuals' understandings are produced could be revealed. However, the implementation of its own critical insights has proved to be highly problematic for critical theory, for even though its intent may be liberatory its methodology is slowly turning into another controlling schema of interpretation.

Clearly, then, there is need to inquire into the meaning of reflective practice , especially critically reflective practice, in order to understand it in a different way. Such an inquiry could assist us in coming to a deeper understanding of the concept and how it could be engaged for the improvement of teaching.

As a study that is concerned with the understanding of meaning, it will be difficult to adopt in this research the problem-solving or fact-finding approach that is typically employed in most educational research. My interest is to understand and improve teacher education research and practices through critical reflection. What is "critical reflection" in teaching is not a question that lends itself to quantitative analyses and coming to conclusions that close down questions about teaching. Rather, if we view "critical reflection" as "reflection on presuppositions" as Mezirow (1990) describes it, then "critical reflection" would require an openness to new questions as they emerge in the inquiry process. The purpose of the endeavour is to arrive at knowledge that explicates participants' meanings and understandings of "critical reflection" as they engage in actual practice in the complex world of teaching.

Because the search for meaning and interpretation is always problematic and cannot, therefore, be finally closed off, hermeneutics which does not assume any end-point in our act of interpretation and understanding will be explored to develop an orientation for this study. As well as providing this methodological framework, hermeneutics also performs a philosophical task in this study. Because it is concerned with understanding human situations rather than objective, scientific explanations of phenomena, hermeneutic insights are especially relevant to any attempt to counter the tendencies of the technological rationality. Therefore, the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1976, 1984), the critical hermeneutics of Jurgen Habermas (1972) and the radical hermeneutics of Gianni Vattimo (1988), all of which attempt to restore dialogue to human relationships by responding critically to the way in which the technical rationality has penetrated the social lifeworlds have provided the philosophical background against which the research questions of this study have been formulated.

This chapter begins with a brief historical development of the hermeneutical tradition and moves into the discussion of certain hermeneutical insights as they relate to the human interpretive act of understanding. Particularly, hermeneutical conversation as a mode of inquiry, text interpretation and understanding through hermeneutics, the function of hermeneutical reflection in text interpretation and understanding as hermeneutical application will be discussed. Vattimo's (1988) "postmodern hermeneutics" which attempts to radicalize hermeneutics by taking it beyond Gadamer into an understanding of hermeneutics as "koine" in order to realize its emancipatory goals will also be discussed. Other works in the hermeneutic tradition will be referred to complementarily as their relevance to the study requires. The research orientation adopted in this study will be situated within this background of theoretical discussions, which will also be referred to as their relevance to the rest of the study requires.

B. The Development of the Hermeneutic Tradition

Hermeneutics is the branch of study that is concerned with meaning and how meaning is revealed through interpretation. More specifically it is a "theory of the operation of understanding in its relation to the interpretation of texts" (Ricoeur, 1981, p.43). The word "hermeneutics" comes from the Greek verb "hermeneuein" which means to interpret.

The basic meaning of this verb is "to bring to understanding" or "to mediate understanding" with respect to the various forms in which understanding may be problematic (Palmer, 1969). Formerly hermeneutics was confined to the interpretation of biblical texts where, as a sub-discipline in theology, philology and law, it was used to interpret texts that were rendered problematic by the ravages of time, cultural differences or by the accidents of history (Howard,1982). Present day hermeneutics extends text interpretation to include not only written texts but, according to Ricoeur (1983) and Gadamer (1976) all kinds of textual expressions such as oral speech and human action.

Modern hermeneutics, which has its origin in Schleiermacher and Dilthey, developed as a response to the problem of valid interpretation and understanding in the human sciences. Once empiricism came to be established by Kant as the central condition for the understanding of the physical world, there arose a problem about a valid way of interpreting and understanding that would be appropriate for the human or "cultural" sciences which is more concerned with fully understanding human life than with natural phenomena. Two different attitudes towards understanding emerged: those concerned with the natural sciences (*NATURWISSENCHAFTEN*) and those concerned with the human sciences (*GEITESWISSENCHAFTEN*). As a result of this split two theories of understanding emerged: "explanation theory" and " understanding theory" (Howard, 1982). Explanation theory holds that the mode of understanding borrowed from the natural sciences could be sufficiently applied to the historical disciplines and that human phenomena could be structured in terms of stable regularities which can be empirically verified as in the positivistic sciences. In short, explanation theory argues that the explanatory procedures of the natural sciences are a necessary and sufficient model for a philosophy of knowledge.

Understanding theory, in contrast, holds that approaching human phenomena according to the methodologies of the natural sciences may be necessary but it is not sufficient for an adequate understanding of human phenomena. To address this issue, another type of understanding was necessary.

Dilthey, a nineteenth century philosopher, believed that it was possible to explain nature in terms of mathematics and ahistorical principles but what is characteristic of our experience of cultural phenomena is that they cannot be relegated to a "non-self" category. They exist, rather, as "for-us" kinds of phenomena that are connected with us and any attempt to relegate them to the non-human systems empties them of their special relational character. Dilthey wrote:

> The human sciences are distinguished from the natural sciences in that the latter take as their object features which appear to consciousness as coming from outside, as phenomena, and as given in particular; for the former, in contrast, the object appears as coming from within, as a reality and as a vivid original whole. It follows, therefore, that for the natural sciences an ordering of nature is achieved only through a succession of conclusions by means of linking of hypotheses. For the human sciences, on the contrary, it follows that the connectedness of psychic life is given as an original and general foundation. Nature we explain, the life of the soul we understand (Dilthey, 1914, quoted in Howard, 1982, pp. 15-16).

"Hermeneutics", which is traditionally described as the art of interpreting language in order to arrive at deeper understanding of text, came to be seen as the foundation for the new science of "Geiteswissenchaften".

Drawing upon the work of his predecessor, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who had brought together two hermeneutical traditions, the philological and the theological, into a "general hermeneutics as the art of understanding" (Palmer, 1969), Dilthey introduced what he called the "hermeneutic circle" in order to define understanding and how it is achieved. Although hermeneutics originally referred to the interpretation of texts, Dilthey elaborated the idea to mean a knowledge of context or background (historicism) that is necessary for the interpretation of events. The process becomes circular because every part of a text requires the rest of it to make it intelligible. Likewise, the whole can only be understood in terms of the parts. Achieving interpretation, and therefore, understanding, requires a constant movement between the parts and the whole in which there is no absolute starting or ending point. The hermeneutic process is important because it recognizes that the meaning of human expression is context bound and cannot be divorced from that context.

From this brief historical background, we can see that hermeneutics developed as a reaction against dominant epistemological and metaphysical presumptions which were deemed to foreclose and limit the possibilities of human knowing. By uncovering the assumptions immanent in the universal, scientific conception of knowledge, hermeneutics has emerged as a resistance to a unified, scientific methodological approach to knowledge and knowing. Henceforth, as a general theory of knowing, hermeneutics would establish both the methodological procedure and condition for valid understanding unique to the human sciences.

C. **Hermeneutics as "koine"**

Changing times, however, require that hermeneutics no longer be limited to performing a methodological role for the human sciences. For Gadamer, hermeneutics was a question of the legitimacy of an "extramethodic" experience of truth. As a result of the successful achievement of this goal new questions are now being posed by numerous and different fields of culture, requiring hermeneutics to go beyond a hermeneutics that is enclosed within any transcendental language. Gianni Vattimo, one of today's leading Italian philosophers and cultural critics, for instance, takes hermeneutics beyond Gadamer and poses it as "koine" (which means a common language) in order to realize itself as an emancipatory programme and to grasp the situation of modern scientific-technological civilization more effectively (Vattimo, 1988). As "koine", hermeneutics cannot be limited to a description or theory of dialogue. Rather, "...it must articulate itself as dialogue, thus committing itself concretely vis-a-vis the contents of tradition" (Vattimo, 1988, p.405). In other words, hermeneutics must be radical enough to open up dialogue with other traditions with which it comes into contact, allowing new and alternative messages to emerge. In

Vattimo's sense hermeneuticists today would not only be Gadamer and Ricoeur, but also Derrida, Habermas, Lyotard and Apel as well.

By positing hermeneutics as "koine" Vattimo is reconsidering the foundations of hermeneutics and returning it to Heidegger's concern over metaphysics as the history of being. Vattimo (1988) explains,

> If...,and in line with Heidegger, we think of metaphysics as the history of being--which means above all that we grant an underlying unity between the two cultures, the hermeneutics and the scientific, as expressions of the same "epoch" of being--it is possible that hermeneutic thought succeeds in formulating a more radical emancipatory programme, the consequence of a more explicit commitment to its proper historical collocation. The living continuity of tradition to which we must appeal in order to give a norm to science and technics, and more generally, to find the bearings for the problems of ethics, is precisely what Heidegger calls history of metaphysics or history of being (pp.406-407).

Hermeneutics as "koine", therefore, becomes a decisive stage in the course through which being withdraws itself "from the dominion of the metaphysical categories of fully displayed presence" (Vattimo, 1988, p.407), and commits itself to its proper task in terms which are non-transcendental. In other words, hermeneutics for Vattimo, as for Richard Rorty, is an expression of the hope that the cultural space left by the demise of epistemology in philosophy will not be filled.

D. Modern Hermeneutics and Text Interpretation

(Schleiermacher, Gadamer, Ricoeur)

At the core of the tensions which continue to this day between the natural sciences and the humanities over "explanation" and "understanding" is the epistemological status of "understanding" in the human phenomena which are essentially subjective. This issue, which involves the problem of valid interpretation in the human sciences, is not new. In this section, I will briefly discuss the way in which it has been addressed by three hermeneutic philosophers: Friedrich Schleiermacher, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. The discussion focuses around the problem of interpretation as conceived of by nineteenth century philosophy (Schleiermacher), through Gadamer's ontological notion of interpretation and Ricoeur's attempt at a less contradictory notion of explanation and understanding which addresses the unresolved problem of validity in hermeneutics. Schleiermacher's approach will serve mainly as a background against which Gadamer's and Ricoeur's theories of interpretation, which are of particular relevance to the mode of interpretation employed in this study, emerged.

Schleiermacher's Psychological Understanding

Schleiermacher's move to integrate the "regional" hermeneutics of philology and theology into a "general" hermeneutics was in large part due to the transcendental way in which he approached the problem of interpretation. Because he gave the problem of interpretation an epistemological grounding, the question for him was: How can we derive the possibility of valid interpretation and critically define its limits in terms of objective criteria? (Palmer, 1969, p.74). It was this search for a transcendental approach based on the natural sciences that earned Schleiermacher the label "the Kant of Hermeneutics" (Ermarth, 1978, quoted in Hur, 1986, p.52).

Schleiermacher's hermeneutic programme was both critical as a struggle against misunderstanding, and romantic in the desire to recover the particularity or the "animating genius" of an author's thoughts. He believed that the genius of interpretation was to be found in understanding an author as well as or even better than he or she understood himself or herself. As such his emphasis was on the subjectivity and psychological factors involved in understanding. He addressed the question of explanation and understanding by making a distinction between the linguistic or grammatical aspects and the psychological or the "divinatory" aspects of text interpretation. In this distinction the linguistic or grammatical aspect of interpretation was concerned with the objective characteristics of discourse which are common to a culture. Psychological interpretation involved penetrating into the inner thoughts of the author's consciousness in order to understand the spirit which initiated and controlled his or her writing. This means that each individual thought that determines and gives birth to a linguistic articulation must be understood in the context of the author's whole life. In this way the hermeneutic circle is expanded to include the whole of human life and existence.

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, however, was faced with an unresolved problem at both the subjective and objective levels. Subjectively, there was the problem of mediating between an empathetic understanding of the author and appreciating the individual differences between subjectivities. Objectively, there was the problem of wielding out the author's individuality among a commonly shared language. Practically, therefore, grammatical and psychological interpretations cannot be carried out together because one form of interpretation excludes the other. As Ricoeur (1981) puts it,

> ...not only does one form exclude the other, but each demands distinct talents, as their respective excesses reveal: an excess of the first (grammatical) gives rise to pedantry, an excess of the second (psychological) to nebulosity (p.47).

As I shall show later, Ricoeur (1981) is to argue that in interpretation emphasis should be shifted from an empathetic investigation of hidden subjectivities towards the sense and reference of the text itself.

Prejudices as a Precondition of Understanding (Gadamer)

Gadamer gives the problem of interpretation a more ontological grounding. His projection of prejudices as preconditions for all understanding is one of the most controversial features of his philosophical hermeneutics. In Truth and Method (1984) he refers to it as his apologia for prejudice against the enlightenment's "prejudice against prejudice" (p.240). For Gadamer the task of hermeneutics is not to specify a distinctive method of the "Geiteswissenchaften" that can rival the scientific method of the "Naturwissenchaften" as had plagued nineteenth century hermeneutics. Rather, the hermeneutical task is "to elucidate the distinctive type of knowledge and truth that is realized whenever we authentically understand" (Bernstein, 1986, p.89). This cannot be achieved through a view of understanding as primarily a psychological, subjective activity in which we identify ourselves with the intentions of the author. According to Bernstein (1986), Gadamer's critique against this type of psychological reductionism in the context of hermeneutics is that there is a latent Cartesianism in this tradition and an acceptance of the basic dichotomy between what is subjective and what is objective (p.89). From Gadamer's (1984) perspective, "understanding must be conceived as part of the process of the coming into being of meaning" (p.247). The question, then, becomes: How does meaning come into being?

Building upon Heidegger's disclosure of the forestructure of understanding (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 191-192), Gadamer stresses that we do not arrive at meaning or valid understanding by leaping out of or seeking to bracket our own historicity, our own forestructures, prejudgments and prejudices. Instead, prejudices function in a positive way to help us understand what is new. Gadamer (1984) tells us:

> It is not so much our judgments as it is our prejudices that constitute our being. This is a provocative formulation, for I am using it to restore to its rightful place as a positive concept of prejudice that was driven out of our linguistic usage by the French and English Enlightenment....Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they erroneously distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply the conditions whereby what we encounter says something to us (p.235).

For Gadamer, then, our prejudices, which are situated in tradition, enable us to open ourselves to what texts say to us and the claim to truth that they make on us. This tradition, which Gadamer also refers to as our "effective history" (1984, p.267) and in which we are situated, is not static. Rather, it is foreward-looking with an anticipatory dimension that opens up further possibilities of our being.

Gadamer (1984) makes a distinction between "blind prejudices" which are disabling, unproductive and lead to misunderstanding and "justified prejudices" which are enabling and are productive of knowledge (p.247). Both sorts of prejudices are constitutive of what we are and are always with us, but by suspending their "validity" and opening ourselves up to what is new in a text to speak to us, we are able to discriminate critically between blind and enabling prejudices. It is through the dialectical process of distanciation from our prejudices and at the same time participating in the world of the text that valid interpretation is achieved. The understanding occurs in "a fusion of horizons" (p.273) in which there is a dialogic encounter between the text that is present and our historical situation, leading to an enlargement of our own horizon and a deeper self-understanding.

We can see from the foregoing that Gadamer makes prejudices, which are rooted in our historical traditions, an important condition for text interpretation and valid understanding. Since these prejudices are not self-enclosed but are essentially fluid and open to new situations, there is no finality in understanding, no absolute knowledge. To understand is always to understand differently.

Understanding as Distanciation and Participation (Ricoeur)

Paul Ricoeur, a French hermeneutical phenomenologist, attempts to re-address the unresolved problem of validity in text interpretation by re-introducing the hermeneutic circle as a dialectic between explanation and understanding.

Since Dilthey, a clear distinction has existed between "understanding" which is conceptualized in psychological terms and "explanation" which is conceived of in terms of "scientific" knowledge which can be secured by objective validity. In this split there has been a tendency to expel "explanation" entirely from the sphere of the human sciences. Ricoeur disagrees with such a sharp dichotomy and seeks to counter it by projecting "explanation" and "understanding" as both necessary conditions in the "appropriation" of a text. He explains that "appropriation means to make one's own what was initially alien, so that interpretation brings together, equalizes and renders contemporary and similar" (1981, p.185). In this act of appropriation it is not the original intentions of the author which are sought but the expansion of the reader's horizons through the actualization of the meaning of the text. In this way, interpretation culminates in self-understanding without equating it with "naive subjectivism" (1981, p.18).

Informed by the Aristotlean contention that interpretation by language comes before interpretation of language, and Peirce's notion that the relation between an interpretant (a meaning) and the sign is an open one allowing a series of interpretants, Ricoeur "de-psychologizes" interpretation and connects it with the process at work when we attempt to interpret a text. We recall that in agreeing that the task of text interpretation is not to seek insights into the author's subjectivity but "to explicate a type of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text" (1981, p.141), Ricoeur displays a keen affinity with Gadamer for whom also the end-point of interpretation is the appropriation of the meaning of the text. But differently from Gadamer, he holds that some form of distanciation from the text is necessary for the appropriation to occur. In written texts this distanciation occurs at various levels. One level is when the discourse of the text becomes inscribed, as opposed to spoken discourse in which there is an ostensive reference and the intention of the speaker and the meaning of what is said frequently overlap. In written texts there is no such overlapping of intention and meaning:

> Writing renders the text autonomous with respect to the intention of the author. What the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author meant; henceforth, textual meaning and psychological meaning have different destinies (Ricoeur, 1983, p.139).

Similarly there is no specified audience in written discourse. The audience becomes anyone who chooses to read the text. Through such autonomy the text "decontextualizes" itself from its social and historical conditions of production and opens itself to an unlimited series of readings and interpretations.

At another level of distanciation the text may be "decontextualized" in order to "recontexualize" it later in a new situation. This involves two possible attitudes towards the text. Ricoeur (1981) writes:

> We can, as readers, remain in the suspense of the text, treating it as a worldless and authorless object; in this case, we explain the text in terms of its internal relations, its structure. On the other hand, we can lift the suspense and fulfill the text in speech, restoring it to living communication; in this case, we interpret (understand) the text. These two possibilities both belong to reading, and reading is the dialectic of these two attitudes. (1981, p.157).

On the one hand, the reader may do a "by" language (structural) analysis of the text in order to explain its internal relations, in which case "explanation" now no longer belongs to the natural sciences but comes from the field of language itself. On the other hand, following Heidegger who conjoins understanding to the notion of "the projection of my ownmost possibilities" (Heidegger, 1969, quoted in Ricoeur, 1981, p.142), the reader may go beyond this analysis of the internal constitution of the text and seek something "disclosed in front of it, that which points to a possible world" (Ricoeur, 1981, p.15). In this case the reader participates in the world of the text to appropriate its meaning and the mode of being of the world opened up by the text becomes the mode of the possible. To understand a text in these two ways is to have arrived at both the epistemological and ontological dimensions of the text. In this case, "explanation" and "understanding" are no longer in opposition with each other as has been assumed in the history of hermeneutics. On the contrary, both are recovered and reconciled in the concrete act of reading.

Ricoeur's theory of interpretation as a dialectic of distanciation and participation is of relevance to this study in two ways. Firstly, by projecting understanding as involving distanciation from and participation in the text, he re-addresses the issue of validity of interpretation in the human sciences on new grounds. As I shall later explain, validity in the sense of Ricoeur has contributed to the methodological principles employed in this research.

Secondly, Ricoeur's dialectic seems to mediate Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Habermas's critical hermeneutics, both of which helped to formulate the questions which shape the background of this study. There has been a tendency in philosophy to see dramatic and consequential differences between the hermeneutics of Gadamer and Habermas in which the former views understanding as inextricably linked with tradition and the latter arguing that tradition itself needs to be subjected to critical examination in order to arrive at authentic understanding. A closer study of their works, however, reveals that their hermeneutics have the same ethical goal, that is, to defend practical reason against the domination of technology based on science. Gadamer (1975a):

> In a scientific culture such as ours the fields of techne and art are much more expanded. Thus the fields of mastering means to pre-given ends have been rendered even more monological and controllable. The crucial change is that practical wisdom can no longer be promoted by personal contact and the mutual exchange of views among the citizens. Not only has craftsmanship been replaced by industrial work, many forms of our daily life are technologically organized so that they no longer require personal decision. In modern technological society public opinion itself has in a new and really decisive way become the object of very complicated techniques...and this, I think, is the main problem facing our civilization (P.312).

Habermas, too, shows concern with this spread of technical reason which he labels "the inner colonization of the "lebenswelt" (Habermas, 1981, quoted in Carson, 1984, p.62). Both Habermas and Gadamer believe that the quintessence of being human is to be dialogical and it is this dialogical character of what we are that is threatened and deformed by a technological society. Vattimo (1988), in a similar way, urges a radically hermeneutical and dialogical engagement of tradition if we are to free ourselves from the domination of metaphysical categories like science and technology.

Ricoeur's dialectic which projects the critical distance as a precondition for understanding echoes Habermas's critical approach to the recovery of dialogue. But critical interest itself can only originate in a tradition within which it is situated. Tradition and criticism thus find themselves in a complementary relation that is crucial to hermeneutical understanding. Ricoeur's (1973) dialectic reveals two things:

> First, that a hermeneutic of tradition can only fulfill its programme if it introduces a critical distance, conceived and practised as an integral part of the hermeneutic process. And, secondly, and on the other hand, that a critique of ideologies too can only fulfill its project if it incorporates a certain regeneration of the past, consequently, a reinterpretation of tradition (pp. 159-160).

E. **The Function of Hermeneutical Reflection**

For Gadamer the function of hermeneutical reflection is mainly to preserve us from "naive surrender to the experts of social technology" (Gadamer, 1976, p. 40). Recognizing that there can be no absolute and "one correct" interpretation leading to understanding, Gadamer (1984) argues that understanding is a dialogical event involving a fusion of horizons between text and interpreter. Language plays a very important part in this process. To arrive at understanding we first have to understand the language we use because our language reveals the views of the world we hold. As the task of hermeneutics is to investigate language in order to gain understanding, every attempt to understand a phenomenon involves a reflective dimension which clarifies and makes explicit the preunderstandings involved in the process of understanding. It is by means of such hermeneutical reflection that our understandings are broadened and enriched:

> Hermeneutic reflection fulfills the function that is accomplished in all bringing of something to a conscious awareness....Only through hermeneutic reflection am I no longer unfree over against myself but rather can deem freely what in my preunderstanding may be justified and what unjustifiable. And also in this manner do I learn to gain a new understanding of what I have seen through eyes conditioned by prejudice. But this implies, too, that the prejudgments that lead my preunderstanding are also constantly at stake, right up to the moment of their surrender--which surrender could also be called a transformation. It is the untiring power of experience, that in the process of being instructed, man is ceaselessly forming a new preunderstanding (Gadamer, 1976, p.38).

For Gadamer, therefore, understanding is a continuous reorganization and re-formation of our experiences; hermeneutical reflection involves a constant self-reflection to arrive at self-understanding. But self-understanding itself involves questioning of preunderstanding which implies critical distanciation. This distance which is provided by hermeneutic reflection is what makes new understanding possible. As Gadamer points out,

> The real power of hermeneutical consciousness is our ability to see what is questionable (1976, p.13).

F. Understanding as Application

One of the central claims in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is that all understanding involves not only interpretation but also application. Gadamer's notion of application in understanding is quite distinctive from the technical sense of "application" as used in, say, "applied mathematics" or "applied linguistics" in which a distinction is made between the theory of these disciplines and their application in practical situations. His notion of "application" corresponds more with Ricoeur's notion of "appropriation" especially when "appropriation" is thought to mean "transforming and becoming constitutive of the person who understands" (Bernstein, 1986, quoted in Wachterhauser, 1986, p.105).

Gadamer rejects an old tradition which divided up hermeneutics into the three distinctive subdisciplines of "understanding", "interpretation" and "application" and argues that these are not three independent categories but are all moments belonging to the single process of hermeneutical understanding. He uses an example from the legal field to illustrate his argument. In legal practice, a law is always there to be understood and interpreted in accordance with a particular legal situation. Here the understanding and the application of the law are not two separate activities but one process. "Understanding here is always application" (Gadamer, 1984, p.275).

Gadamer appropriates Aristotle's analysis of phronesis in explicating the sense in which all understanding is application. Aristotle makes three distinctions between techne (technical know-how) and phronesis (ethical know-how). Firstly, techne is scientific or technical knowledge which has a universal application but phronesis, which is ethical knowledge, is always applied according to the exigencies of the concrete situation. Secondly, in techne the goal is a particular end-product and the means to this end are prespecified and not weighed anew according to emerging situations. In phronesis there can be no prior knowledge of the right means by which an end is realized. The end itself is only concretely specified in deliberating about the means appropriate to a particular situation. Thirdly, in technical know-how the knower is detached from what he or she knows but ethical know-how is knowledge of a distinctive type grounded in the concern for others:

> The person with understanding does not know and judge as one who stands apart and unaffected, but rather as one united by a specific bond with the other; he thinks with the other and undergoes the situation with him (Gadamer, 1984, P.288).

Phronesis, then, is a form of knowledge and reasoning that "involves a distinctive mediation between the universal and the particular" (Bernstein, in Wachterhauser,1986, p.91). This mediation is not accomplished by applying pre-given, universal, technical rules to a situation. It is accomplished through an ethical know-how that is able to codetermine the universal and the particular. As Gadamer (1975) further makes us aware, phronesis involves "a peculiar interlacing of being and knowledge determination through one's own becoming" (p.107). As we can see, knowledge for Gadamer is not objective knowledge that is detached from one's own being and becoming. It follows that understanding is not something detached from the interpreter but is constitutive of his or her praxis in which there is always a mediation between the universal and the particular involving deliberation and choice. Gadamer (1975) writes:

> The interpreter dealing with a traditional text seeks to apply it to himself. But this does not mean that the text is given to him as something universal, that he understands as such and only afterwards uses it for particular application. Rather, the interpreter seeks no more than to understand this universal thing, the text, i.e., to understand what this piece of tradition says, what constitutes the meaning and the importance of the text. In order to understand that, he must not seek to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to his situation, if he wants to understand at all (p.289).

Application, from the foregoing, is neither a subsequent nor a merely occasional part of understanding. Rather application codetermines understanding as a whole from the beginning, and it is always praxis. I shall return to the notion of understanding as application in Chapter 6 where the problem of application as it relates to the relevance of this study to my country is addressed in a more concrete context. What is striking and relevant about Gadamer's (1975) appropriation of Aristotle's analysis of phronesis to posit a theory of understanding is the way phronesis as "thoughtful reflection" (p.288) or praxis comes to be distinguished from techne. I have already indicated that the impetus for this study derives from the way the technical rationality has come to dominate teaching and that the desire to embrace critical reflection practice is a response to this problem. Gadamer's view of application as phronesis, rather than as techne, could assist us to reconsider and understand anew the real meaning of teaching.

G. **Conversation as a Mode of Research**

Guided by Gadamer's hermeneutical priority and openness of the question through conversation, I have employed conversation as a research mode in inquiring into the meaning of "critical reflection" in teaching. According to Gadamer (1984) questionability is implicit in all our experiences if we wish to understand the world, for we cannot have experiences without asking questions (p.325). For this reason the question assumes priority over the answer. The special characteristic of the question which allows understanding to occur is its openness, in the sense that the answer is not determined in advance. If the question already has a predetermined answer it closes off the possibility of arriving at true understanding. The openness of the question allows it to accommodate both negative and positive arguments and arriving at knowledge involves the dialectical process of looking at these opposites until the counter arguments are seen to contain no positive contributions to the question at hand. But, according to Gadamer (1984), a question is not something that we have in advance. A question "presents itself" (p.329) and in order for this to happen, we have to engage what Gadamer calls a "radical negativity" (p.325), that is, admitting that we do not know. Knowing and admitting that we do not know enables us to ask questions in order to know and the questions in turn open the being of the object we wish to inquire into. A true question, as opposed to a false one, implies an openness and explicit establishing of presuppositions which enable us to see what still remains to be investigated.

Gadamer (1984) posits the art of questioning neither as a techne to be applied to predetermined situations nor as a craft to be taught in order to master the knowledge of truth or win an argument. Rather it is a dialectic in which the person wanting to seek the truth persists in asking questions and preserving an orientation towards openness. He writes:

> The art of questioning is that of being able to go on asking questions, that is, the art of thinking. It is called "dialectic", for it is the art of conducting a real conversation (1984, p.330).

The openness of the question is only realized through conversation because participants in a genuine conversation are directed by a sense of openness occasioned by their desire to know about something of mutual interest to them but which is presently indeterminate. In my research, for example, the problem of how we can prepare teachers who can relate to students in a pedagogical manner has no predetermined answer or direction. It is a topic of common interest to myself and those who have agreed to participate in the investigation of the problem. The real questions about how the problem will be resolved only "comes" to us during our conversations. By allowing ourselves to remain open to the questions that arise and by keeping these questions open, we would come to an understanding of practice that addresses the issue under investigation. But what is the nature of conversation that allows this understanding to take place? What does it mean to conduct a research conversation?

The Nature of Conversation

Conversation is more like dialogue where there is genuine interest in both partners to hear the other's voice and a willingness to work together to develop understanding (Gadamer, 1984). Gadamer conceives of dialogue or "talk" as the source of our growing awareness of how things really are in the world. This means that it is only from the point of view of dialogue in a particular field that the subject matter of the field begins to emerge and take on recognizable meaning and adequate intelligibility. In this sense, dialogue is not simply an incidental condition of inquiry, but, as Wachterhauser (1986, p.33) argues, "it is the very life of inquiry, discovery and truth itself". In real conversation, that is, one in which the participants are not concerned with winning an argument or defending a position, the twists and turns of dialogue may lead to new insights into the subject matter that were unintended and that lead to novel situations unanticipated by the partners:

> What emerges in its truth is the logos, which is neither mine nor yours and hence so far transcends the subjective opinions of the partners to the dialogue that even the person leading the conversation is always ignorant (Gadamer, 1984 p.331).

What I refer to as research conversation would be similar to what Gadamer (1984) calls genuine conversation in the sense that the partners do not talk at cross purposes but allow themselves to be conducted by the object to which they are directed (p.330). They are driven by a shared topic of concern in which they have some vested interest and which they wish to understand. It is this concern with the topic, which is mediated through language, that actually prompts and sustains the conversation. In this research, the need to improve teaching through critical reflection upon practice is the topic of concern for all of us participating in the study and it is this topic which sustains our dialogue.

Conversations or linguistic accounts also have a way of attending to what Gadamer (1984) calls "the infinity of the unsaid". This implies that any linguistic account carries within it unspoken meanings and possibilities of understanding or critique that needs to be explored and articulated. As Wachterhauser (1986, p.34) makes us aware, these unexpressed accounts are not necessarily deficiencies but sources of possible meanings that could throw a new light on the topic under investigation. This means that in a research conversation the researcher needs to be sensitive, both during the conversation and in reflecting upon it later, to what is implicit and unsaid whether as a source of criticism or as a positive contribution to the discourse.

Conversations about "critical reflection" in teaching and teacher education were open to this "circle of the unexpressed". Particularly, the sighs, silences and bodily expressions were all elements of our conversation that were explored as they emerged in order to arrive at the meaning of "critical reflection" in teaching.

Additionally the transcripts of the conversations in themselves emerged as texts to be reflected upon in a hermeneutical way to arrive at an understanding of the meaning of "critical reflection" in teaching. Such reflection involved an engagement of temporal distanciation from the texts during which what has been disclosed by participants during our conversations were reflected upon, thus opening the way for further questioning about it.

H. Conducting the Study

Gadamer's understanding of philosophical hermeneutics has provided not only the philosophical background but also the methodological considerations of this study. Particularly, his notion of text interpretation, his conditions for the possibility of arriving at valid understanding, his notion of understanding as application, his views on hermeneutical reflection and conversation, as discussed in the first part of this chapter, have had implications for the research principles of this study.

Following Gadamer's statement about keeping the question open through genuine conversation, I conducted the research into the meaning of "critical reflection" in teaching by entering into a series of three conversations with each of seven participants involved in the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 course which was a collaborative action research project on critically reflective practice in the teaching of social studies. The participants consisted of three student teachers, two co-operating teachers and two faculty consultants. I present below the pseudonyms of the participants and a brief background of each. Their real names and the names of the schools where they teach have been concealed in order to ensure anonymity.

The student teachers

Rick Mary Yashmine	All student teachers at the University of Alberta on the final phase of their teaching practicum and members of the action research class.

The faculty consultants

Andy	A social studies teacher at a high school in Edmonton for nine years and was on secondment at the University of Alberta. He was one of the three instructors of the action research social studies course and faculty consultant for Yashmine.
Henry	A social studies teacher at a high school in Edmonton. He is now a doctoral candidate at the University of Alberta and instructor of the action research social studies course. He was also faculty consultant for several of the students in the action research programme.

The co-operating teachers

Cliff	A social studies teacher at a high school in Edmonton for nineteen years and co-operating teacher for Mary.
Shelly	A social studies teacher at an Edmonton high school for seventeen years and co-operating teacher for Rick.

The conversations took place between April and November, 1991. Some were held at the University of Alberta and others at the schools where the participants were teaching.

Guided by my understanding of hermeneutics as a research principle, I initiated three stages of research conversations with the participants. The first stage was to introduce myself and my research intentions to them in an informal manner. This was followed by a formal letter of introduction (Appendix A) to each of them and a copy of what I prefer to call "conversation openers" instead of research questions (Appendix B) because they were intended more to initiate and orient our conversations than serve as interview questions formulated beforehand in order to control or direct the inquiry.

Three weeks after, I spoke to the student teachers and the faculty consultants (who were all with me at the University of Alberta) and I visited the co-operating teachers in their schools so that we could arrange a mutually agreeable time to start the actual research. By now I had established some cordial relationships with the participants and this cordiality later guided our research conversations. This was important for the research because conversation is a personal and friendly form of discourse in which no one dominates or is intimidated by the other.

The second stage of the research conversation constituted the first conversation about the actual research. Guided by Gadamer's hermeneutic priority of the question over the answer, I maintained a structure of openness towards the meaning of "critical reflection" in teaching and teacher preparation during our conversations, while at the same time remaining attentive and sensitive to any unexpressed intentions and assumptions that could throw more light on the research questions. Each conversation with a participant was audio-recorded to enable me to return later to our concerns in the conversation and see the movements of our explorations. Each conversation was then transcribed, analysed and hermeneutically reflected upon and interpreted to arrive at what it was saying about "critical reflection" in teaching.

As a hermeneutic engagement the act of understanding meaning is a central concern of this study. One way in which I was able to disclose meaning was through the use of themes. According to Van Manen (1990) themes help us make sense of and put into words the meanings we are trying to understand. Themes also give order to our research and writing and keeps them from remaining a shapeless form. Therefore, after each analysis of a conversation, I would identify the themes that emerged and write them down, along with samples of our conversation about these themes. I would come up with an interpretation of each theme and how it relates to "critical reflection" in teaching. Where questions arose about the relationship of a theme to "critical reflection" I would write down such questions alongside my interpretations. These questions, the summary transcripts and my interpretations were returned to the participants for their reflections prior to the next stage of our conversation.

The third stage involved another stage of the conversation during which the themes and interpretations that had emerged previously were discussed. The questions I had raised about a theme, as well as any new insights emerging about the meaning of "critical reflection" and its relevance to teaching, were also discussed. The conversations were again analysed and reflected upon for agreed-upon themes and interpretations before being included in the study as the meanings of a participant.

Taking the themes and interpretations back to the participants constituted what Lather (1986) refers to as "member check(ing)" which was a way of ensuring that they were given a chance to understand the interpretations, reflect on them and validate them as the meaning that each had in mind. Where there was a disagreement, the issue was discussed until we reached what Kvale (1984) refers to as good "Gestalt", that is, inner unity of interpretation which is free of logical contradictions.

The themes and interpretations, as well as my overall observations on them regarding the relationship between critical reflection and teaching, are presented in Chapter IV.

I. The Context of the Study

The context of the research was a collaborative action research social studies course, EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354. It involved the instructors and the students in the course, and the faculty consultants and some co-operating teachers in the practicum component of the course. The question that was being pursued in that class was how "critical reflection" could be incorporated as an aspect of the social studies curriculum and instruction course and how the relations between the university and the schools could be reconstructed to provide a more "critical" experience for student teachers during the course and the practicum. This was in accordance with the move by the University of Alberta towards a critically reflective approach to teacher preparation. The programme involved four weeks of university classes during which the student teachers were exposed to critically reflective approaches to teaching social studies, followed by four weeks of student teaching. The students then returned to the university for two weeks of reflection, followed by another four weeks of teaching in their placement schools. During the practicum they were observed and supervised by the faculty consultants and co-operating teachers.

My role in the action research project was twofold: a "critical friend" and a researcher. As "critical friend" my role was to observe the critically reflective teaching methods of the instructor in whose class I was and provide critical feedback which could be useful to him in reflecting about his teaching activities in the class and about the project as a whole. As researcher I would gather as much data as I could about critically reflective teaching from the student teachers, the faculty consultants and the co-operating teachers in the project who agreed to participate in the study.

My decision to use collaborative action research as the context for my study was guided by my intention to engage questions about critical reflection with others in a social setting. As I said earlier the background to this study has been shaped by Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics which locates understanding within tradition or history, and Habermas's critical hermeneutics which places understanding within a critique of tradition. Both of these hermeneutics involve the engagement of critical distance from tradition (practice) and reflecting upon it, first to understand it and then act to improve it. The hope for improved practice lies in such critical distanciation and questioning. Action research returns this questioning to the ground of practice where teachers and others with a practical interest reflect upon practice, speak about what this means for them and orienting themselves towards action to improve teaching practices.

The strength of action research for this purpose lies in its orientation towards a form of critical social science in education which is suited to the working condition of teachers interested in the improvement of their own practices. It is a form of social and self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in order to improve the rationality and justice of their practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). This is based on the belief that rational understanding of practice can only be gained through systematic reflection on action by the actors involved in the practice. The participants in my study were all drawn together by a common desire to improve educational practices through critical reflection. As this overall interest led us to reflect upon presupposed ways of viewing these practices, insights emerged that could guide actions leading to the improvement of those practices.

The method of action research is based on the self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, then replanning, further observation and reflection on action by those involved in the practices being considered. Because it is collaborative and involves participants at every stage of the process, the knowledge derived is "personal knowledge" (Polanyi, in Carr & Kemmis, 1986) which is more reliable and informed than knowledge derived from objectively conducted research by outsiders. In this study it was the reflective moments of the action research spiral that contributed to the student teachers' coming to a deeper understanding of "critical reflection" in teaching.

Action research, then, has an emancipatory interest to improve not only educational practices but also the rationality and justice of those practices. As well it is premised on the idea that knowledge grows from reflecting upon experience and that knowledge itself is a continuous process of reconstruction by participants in practical situations (Freire, 1988).

Conducting my research in an action research context was also important to me for two reasons. First, action research critically rethinks the theory/practice problem in education, especially in Third World countries where we still largely believe in the rationalist assumption that good practice consists of the application of theoretical knowledge and principles which are consciously understood prior to that practice. It is believed that theory (much of which we get from foreign textbooks) has to determine in advance our teaching practices even though some of the theories are removed from our everyday realities. In education we have several theories, e.g., curriculum theories, instructional theories, learning theories and theories about teacher competence, etc. While each of these theories illuminates aspects of teaching, as Carson (1990) argues, it does so at the expense of removing them from their meaning in practical classroom situations.

The turn towards interpretive knowing through action research is an effort to ground our theoretical understandings in our practices, thereby confronting the theory-practice debate in education. The epistemology of action research, based as it is on critical social science, is constructivist, seeing knowledge as developing by a process of active construction and reconstruction of theory and practice by those involved in the practice. Rather than allowing externally formulated theories to determine our teaching, we could employ action research to develop theories about educational practice that are rooted in the concrete experiences of practitioners and that attempt to confront and resolve those educational problems to which these experiences give rise. This is based on the belief that action research involves practitioners directly in theorizing about their own practices and revising their theories self-critically in the light of their practical consequences.

A more recent postmodernist and post-structuralist approach to action research has addressed the theory/practice debate further. This approach questions the very foundations of any theory, arguing that the ambiguity and multiplicity of practice escape any dominant theoretical explanation (Miller, 1990, quoted in Carson, 1992, p.9). This means that post-structuralist action research does not argue for a resolution of the theory-practice debate. It is content to remain in-between, thereby creating space for ethical reflection on action and multiple possibilities for reflective practice (Carson, 1992).

Second, action research recognizes that the understandings of participants are the bases for social action. It appreciates that these understandings are constrained by objective limits which are changeable because they are socially constructed, and that if participants are activist enough, they can alter these limits to create new understandings. The experience of action research during the course of this study will help me in my own country as I attempt to make teachers aware that the present realities in teaching could be altered by our own committed actions to move towards more pedagogical relationships with our students.

J. **Validity in the Study**

> ...qualitative research is concerned with matters of meaning. Meaning is an elusive term, and one way to treat such elusive matters is to neglect them entirely. Behaviourism took this route. What matters most in behaviourism is what people or animals do, not what the doing means to them. For qualitative researchers meaning, though elusive, still counts (Eisner, 1991, p.35).

In the debate between the natural and interpretive sciences natural science has often equated meaning with "facts" that have a general predictive validity while interpretive science has been left with the task of testing an ultimately subjective agreement in order to satisfy questions of validity.

In a hermeneutic research of this nature, validity is based on grounds that are different from those applied to natural science. Following Gadamer (1984) conversation does not return for external validation beyond the participants. My research inquired into the meaning of "critical reflection" for the participants and they were the co-researchers in this inquiry. Their conversations are quoted to give authority both to the fact that I, the researcher, was there in the field and to verify that "someone really said this exactly this way and this can be documented" (Lather, 1992, p.134). The research findings presented in this study as the meanings of the participants have their own in-built validity that transcends any privileged externalized form of validity, for they are derived from participants' stock of knowledge and experience from practical situations of teaching.

A further level of validity in this research finds grounding in Ricoeur's (1981) notion that the adequacy of the interpretation is judged only by "returning to the texts themselves". This involves the dialectic process of "distanciation" and "participation". In this study this dialectic was engaged at two levels. First, a distancing of self from situation occurred when we, as participants, entered into conversation about teaching practices with a desire to improve them. Second, distanciation from the texts of the conversations themselves occurred when, as interpreter, my own pre-understandings about "critical reflection" in teaching were suspended in order to allow the "sayings" of the texts of the conversations to emerge and "speak" something new to me. Through these two levels of distanciation, understanding became possible by means of participation in the text, and then appropriation of the meaning which stood "in front of" the texts of the conversations. It is this dialectic process that allows adequate interpretation and hermeneutic understanding. As Ricoeur (1981, p.116) argues, this dialectic is irreducible to any predetermined procedure of validation.

It was validity in the senses of Gadamer and Ricoeur that guided the research principles of this study.

Chapter IV

Participants' Meanings

A. Introduction

In a hermeneutical inquiry of this nature, concern is with arriving at understanding through the disclosure of meanings. Such meanings are derived from an interpretation of what the texts speak about explicitly as well as implicitly. In this chapter I draw upon the hermeneutical insights of Gadamer (1984) and Ricoeur (1983) relating to text interpretation and valid understanding, as explicated in chapter III, to attempt a hermeneutical interpretation of the meaning of critical reflection and its relationship to teaching for the participants in this study. We are reminded that for Gadamer text interpretation occurs during a process of hermeneutical reflection upon the text and valid understanding is only possible within a fusion of horizons between the pre-understandings of the interpreter and what is present in the text. For Ricoeur, valid interpretation and understanding involves the dialectical process of distanciation and participation within which the interpreter takes a critical distance from the text, while simultaneously participating in the "world of the possible" which the text discloses, in order to appropriate its meaning. Interpretation in the senses of Gadamer (1984) and Ricoeur (1983) have guided my effort in analyzing and interpreting the texts of the conversations in this study in order to arrive at participants' meanings of critical reflection. The meanings have emerged from three research conversations held with each of seven participants involved with an action research programme on the critically reflective approach to teaching social studies (described under "the context of the study" in chapter III). The participants were: three student teachers in the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 social studies programme, two co-operating teachers and two faculty advisors collaborating in the programme.

The conversations were held between the months of April and November, 1991 and they were centred around the relationship between critical reflection and teaching and the relevance of this relationship to teaching for the participants. Fundamental questions regarding this relationship emerged during the conversations and these guided and focused our discussions. For instance: What views did you have about teaching before you experienced the EDSEC 3756 EDPR 354 program? Have these views changed in any way? If so, what part did critical reflection play in this change? What does critical reflection in teaching social studies mean to you? As questions such as these were probed within the context of our conversations, we were able to come to a deeper understanding of not only the meaning and relevance of critical reflection in teaching but also the structures that constrain the implementation of critically reflective practice in teaching.

As each conversation with a participant built upon the previous one, themes emerged which I later analysed, interpreted and negotiated with each participant to come to an understanding of the relationship between critical reflection and teaching. The themes of each participant are presented below. They are preceded by a brief background of each participant, my relationship with him or her and a brief overview of our conversations.

As my interpretations of these themes are read, however, it will be well to remember Barthes's argument (with which I agree) that "...in the text only the reader speaks" (Barthes, quoted in Lather, 1991, p. xx). This means that within a hermeneutical and deconstructive approach to text interpretation there exists the possibility of multiple meanings and readings of critical reflection in this chapter. Each reading would reflect Bordo's (1989) words:

> We always 'see' from points of view that are invested with our social, political and personal interests, inescapably 'centric' in one way or another, even in the desire to do justice to heterogeneity (Quoted in Lather, 1991, p.139).

My intention in providing the data in this chapter is to create a text that is open enough to allow multiple readings, my own reading being only one of such multiplicity.

Mary

Mary was a student teacher enrolled in the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 action research program. She had originally come from the Philippines to Canada with her parents when she was thirteen years old. Upon completing high school she had proceeded to the University of Alberta to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree after which she transferred to the University of Calgary to do a Master's degree in sociology. During the Master's programme, she was given the opportunity to teach an introductory sociology course to undergraduates at the University of Calgary for three years. She told me that she did not complete her thesis for that degree but as a result of certain "interesting" experiences she had while teaching that course, she decided to become a teacher. Having come to this decision, she dropped out of the Master's programme and returned to the University of Alberta for her teaching qualification. I was in the action research programme with her as observer and "critical friend" to the course instructor from January to April, 1991. When our research conversations started she had just completed her teaching practicum at a high school in Edmonton where she had taught social studies in grades 10 and 11.

Long before the first of our conversations I had spoken to Mary about my intention to research into the way student teachers experienced the relationship between critical reflection and teaching during both the university component of the programme and their teaching practica. She straightaway expressed a willingness to participate in my research because, as she told me, the course instructor had told them at the beginning that the aim of the program was to promote critical reflection in teaching and she was curious to learn more about this goal. Thereafter she and I developed a cordial relationship which guided our research conversations.

During the third week of March I gave her a copy of the questions which were to guide our conversations (Appendix B) assuring her that the questions were mainly "conversation openers" and that she was free to include any additional questions of her own. Between April 22 and July 20, we had three research conversations in my office. Each lasted about one hour and five minutes and was audio-recorded. Following each conversation I would summarise, analyse and interpret the recording in order to identify the themes that were related to critical reflection in teaching. Each theme was accompanied by the section of our dialogue in which it had occurred. I would then provide Mary with a copy of each summary along with my interpretation of the relationship between each theme and my overall research question. Questions that had arisen as a result of my own reflections on this relationship were also included in the summaries. These summaries were to serve as reminders of the topics we had covered during our previous conversation as well as topics for the subsequent conversations.

My first conversation with Mary focused mainly on some of the uncertainties and insecurity she had felt as a student teacher, which had made her become extremely engrossed with her performance, thus shutting out her students, as revealed in her remark:

> M. I was so engrossed with the way I was performing as a teacher that I sometimes forgot that they (the students) were there.
> (1, 22-4-91).

The uncertainties had their origins in the earlier views that Mary had about teaching and they manifested themselves in the overwhelming need she felt to overplan her lessons, acquire subject matter knowledge and control her class.

> M. I thought if I did it all I'd be a successful teacher. I did not want to fail.
> (1, 22-4-91).

During the second conversation we discussed some of the constraints she had experienced when she was doing her teaching practicum. For instance, she spoke about the difficulty she experienced while attempting to carve out a teaching identity for herself in an already "established" world of teaching:

> M. Mrs. B. (her faculty advisor) wanted me to teach my lessons in one way. Mr. E. (her co-operating teacher) wanted me to teach in another. When I was torn like this, I became a nervous wreck.
> (2, 20-6-91).

When we returned to her student teaching experiences again during our third conversation Mary spoke about the role which critical reflection had played in assisting her to make sense of these experiences in her growth as teacher. Our third conversation also addressed pertinent issues such as the need for a programme structured to promote and accommodate critical reflection in teaching. She expressed a general satisfaction with the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme and mentioned a few components that had promoted critical reflection in teaching for her. Specifically, she mentioned such components as journal writing, the university seminars, the call-back session and visiting schools beforehand to get acquainted with the way schools function.

We covered over thirty five topics in our conversations and, as a result of rigorous analyses, four themes emerged which addressed Mary's meaning of critical reflection as it relates to teaching. These were:

1. Uncertainty while practising teaching
2. Tension between wanting to create your own identity as teacher and having to function within an "established" world of teaching
3. Need for a program structured to promote and accommodate critical reflection in the preparation of teachers
4. Personal and professional growth through reflection on practice

Theme one: Uncertainty while practising teaching

Being very concerned with her performance as a student teacher emerged as a theme very early in our first conversation. Mary spoke about how this concern had led her to a self-engrossment that shut out the students who were the very reason why she wanted to become a teacher. As we explored the theme of self-engrossment as teacher, it became clear that one reason for it was that, as a student teacher who lacked experience in teaching, she had gone through a lot of uncertainty which ultimately led her to put great emphasis on the way she was performing the technical acts of teaching, neglecting to consider how the students were actually being affected by mere performance. We explored her journey from "teacher one" when she had newly enrolled in the programme through "teacher four" after completing the programme.

> Y. You seem to be returning often in this conversation to the fact that "to teach" now means something quite different from what it meant before you experienced the practicum. Can we talk more about that? What view did you have before about teaching?
>
> M. ....That it was one of those things you think you can easily do. My first experience in teaching was with adults (at the University of Calgary) and this experience is quite different from teaching kids in a school setting. I used to think that as long as I prepared myself thoroughly in the topic I wanted to teach on a particular day and planned in advance how to teach it , the rest would be easy. And so my major concern was to master the course content of social studies. Although the texts we had were quite adequate for grades 10 & 11, I still spent a large amount of time in the library looking for supplementary material. I thought the lecture method was the most effective way of passing on my vast store of knowledge to my students. That was "teacher one", as Terry would say....My students very quickly lost interest in the class when I was teaching....My co-operating teacher said that I tended to lecture too much and suggested activities that would involve the students.
> (1, 22-4-91).

For Mary, who was unsure of herself as a new teacher, subject matter knowledge was more important than pedagogy as an engagement of students, teacher and knowledge. During my research conversation with her co-operating teacher (who is a participant in this study), he told me about the concern which he had had about Mary's worry over her lack of knowledge in social studies and he had done what he could to "cure" this obsession with immediate subject matter expertise. He had done so mainly by explaining to her that content expertise would be acquired over time as she became familiar with the material. In giving Mary such advice, however, he was failing to realize that in the world of teaching, a definite relationship exists between content expertise and power in the classroom. In the minds of student teachers power and authority in the classroom can only come from the control which they have over content. A contradictory reality, however, is that in this view of what it means to know, classroom students are significantly missing. Mary was to find this out later:

> M. Now I know that what I was doing was not teaching....Why ? Because I was not relating to my students or involving them....I was talking past them instead of with them and I became physically and mentally exhausted from all the hard work I did "teaching" and this was not teaching at all....At least that's how I see it now.
>
> ...I think I was trying to prove how capable I was. I mean, in the beginning we tend to think that it is impressive to be up there in front of the class, especially a senior class, and tell what we know...and then give the students tests to find out if they know it. I used to give tests every other week and, boy, I was always marking books. All together my teaching day ended only when I was asleep. Otherwise, I was always planning, teaching, marking and planning. I thought that if I did it all I'd be a successful teacher. I did not want to fail.
> (1, 22-4-91).

"Being up there in front of the class" expresses not only the awesome nature of the teaching role that confronts the student teacher but also the view of knowledge which Mary had as a beginning teacher. Implicit in her view of knowledge was that it flowed in one direction--from the teacher "up there" who had it, to the students who did not. There was no negotiation or co-construction of knowledge with her students and in the encounter meaningful pedagogy was oddly reduced to a mechanical process of knowledge transmission.

Uncertainty was also inherent in the way Mary struggled to maintain control over her classes. As our conversation continued she acknowledged that her co-operating teacher had been right about involving the students in the teaching/learning process through certain activities. However, as soon as she started planning in her head how to do this,

> M. I visualized myself losing control of the class. It was a lot easier to have them all in their seats with me in front where I could keep my eyes on them.
> (1, 22-4-91).

Mary's preoccupation with maintaining tight control over her class had its origin in her own school experience. Attending school in the Philippines, she had grown up with the belief that tight control was the only way by which a teacher could get the children to listen and learn. To her a successful teacher was the teacher who was able to exert this control. As I listened to her, I was reminded of my own days as a new teacher when I would do anything to maintain control in my class, not realizing that if the teaching method was in fact less rigid there would be no need for such control. Like Mary, the implicit theory that I had about establishing classroom control before putting across the subject matter to the students was rooted in my own school biography. Schooling shapes the meanings, realities and experiences of students and thus when we start learning how to teach, we draw upon these subjective experiences to construct our performance. My most poignant memories of my school days are those of my teachers' daily struggle to maintain control in the classroom so that they could transmit to us the information that they had somehow managed to acquire in circumstances characterised by a lack of teaching resources such as textbooks and enough room to accommodate every one of the sixty or more students in the class. Consequently, when I started teaching the image of the teacher as instrumental controller and disciplinarian structured my own classroom activity. I felt that any other way of handling the class was highly idealistic, theoretical and, therefore, impossible to execute.

Uncertainty was also implicit in the daily overplanning which Mary indulged in during the earlier part of her practicum. As an inexperienced teacher she was convinced that every class activity would proceed according to the way she planned it. However, as she was to discover later, while planning helped her go through the lesson in an orderly manner, it did not always ensure pedagogical success. As she wrote in her dialogue journal,

> M. I have realized that there is really no need to overplan. I need to be flexible enough to allow the interests of my students and what emerges in the classroom to take precedence over elaborately planned lessons.
> (Journal entry of Feb. 26, 1991).

As Britzman (1991) reminds us, planning has to be fused with the ability to think on one's feet and deal with the unexpected in the classroom. It is the unexpected occurrences in the classroom that affirms the uncertainty with which pedagogy is infused. Through critical reflection upon her teaching Mary was able to move away from overplanning and allow a pedagogical being with her students.

In her concern not to fail as a teacher Mary's teaching activities became an engrossment with her performance, rather than with her students. In the end she became physically and mentally exhausted as well as emotionally drained. In trying to become a capable, knowledgeable and confident teacher, she almost lost herself in the process and was "on the verge of burning out even before becoming a full-fledged teacher" (1,22-4-91). The self-engrossment is indicative of uncertainty rooted in her lack of experience in teaching which made her focus more on her performance than on her students. Her dialogue journal again:

> M. Both Mr. E. and Mrs. B. were in my grade 10E social studies class today. I felt very uncomfortable and unsure of myself. Unfortunately it was the students who paid the price for the way I handled the material. I ended up being more concerned with how I seemed to Mr. E. and Mrs. B. and forgot about the students. Thinking about it now, I realise that this was wrong. I have to remember that no matter what happens in the classroom, the students are the reason for my being there and that their learning is of prime importance.
> (Journal entry of march 28, 1991).

There is usually much pain and, sometimes, grief as idealized views about teaching are put to the test in the sometimes harsh realities of the classroom. It is one of the struggles with the meaning of teaching which all student teachers are faced with as they attempt to define themselves as teachers. Once they actually begin teaching the visions of practice with which they started are continually re-thought, re-worked and re-created. When the topic of uncertainty came up again during our final conversation Mary disclosed that as she became more oriented to the realities of school and, as critical reflection on her own practice helped her make sense of the complex instability of the teaching role, she began to re-question her views about teaching and her relationship with her students.

> M. Reflecting on my teaching in a critical way...reading over my journal sometimes late at night...have helped me reframe my initial ideas about teaching. My reflections are becoming more grounded in pedagogical concerns rather than mere performance.
> (3, 20-7-91).

Theme two: Tension between wanting to create your own identity as teacher and having to function within an already "established" teaching world

How do student teachers experience their inherited circumstances of teaching? This was the question that persisted in my mind as Mary and I discussed her struggles during her student teaching to carve out her own teaching identity. The discourse of teacher education is replete with an instrumentalist belief in controlling and manipulating variables (be they student teachers or teaching behaviours) in order to perpetuate that which has already been identified and established as what works in teaching. As a result student teachers are confronted with a conformity that denies them any space within which they can be anything else other than what has already been established. Despite Mary's effort not to sound bitter about this constraint because, as she put it, "Schools want to make sure that costly mistakes by student teachers do not happen" (2, 20-6-91), her frustration with a system that suppresses individual subjectivity in favour of teaching behaviours that have been established as "practical", irrespective of their harmful results, came across very clearly in our second conversation. When I asked her whether she had modified any aspect of the Social Studies 20 Curriculum to suit classroom circumstances, she had this to say:

> M....It was not so much modifying the curriculum itself as the tension that sometimes existed between Mr. E. (her co-operating teacher), Mrs. B. (her faculty advisor) and myself. They both had definite ways of teaching certain social studies topics and they expected, even advised me to go along with their teaching strategies. I wanted to teach in my own way and they wanted me to teach in another. I was totally torn apart between them.
>
> .....My faculty advisor did not like the way Mr. E. taught. For example, one day I was teaching Third World way of living in grade 11. Mr. E. wanted me to show

> the videos about Third World living first and then relate these to the concepts in the textbook. My faculty advisor wanted me to do the opposite. I wanted to teach in a way that could bring about a lot of discussion among the kids about the videos. But I was afraid to follow my own instincts for fear of offending them, especially Mrs. B.. She intimidated me so much... (2,20-6-91).

Mary went on to illustrate how one teaching method could work for one teacher but not for another, especially an inexperienced student teacher like herself:

> M. Mr. E. told me to skip the topic on race relations because of its potential to explode. He did not trust me to handle the topic well so he asked me to go on to the "Impact of Imperialism". As if that was not enough, he even went on to make suggestions about how I was to teach "Imperialism". I had read the material and I thought it would be fun to teach it using a debate with the students among the imperialist European nations. I discussed it with Mr. E. but he disapproved, so I used the method which he suggested and all hell broke loose in the class. I lost control of the class and the lesson. (2, 20-6-91).

Mary explained that the method Mr. E. had suggested was lecture oriented even though he had advised her earlier to keep away from lecturing and get the students involved in the lesson. Ten minutes into the lesson the students showed their boredom by either bowing their heads on their desks or asking for permission to go to the bathroom. When too many of them were going to "the bathroom" she had stopped giving permission but they went anyway. At this point she had felt total frustration and had not known how to re-establish her authority in the class. In her dialogue journal for that day she wrote:

> Brian (her dialogue partner), I know you are going to find this ridiculous but I cried today after my social 20 class. The kids were so mean and defiant that I did not know what to do...
> (Journal entry for Feb. 20, 1991).

One of the realities of learning to teach is the constant contradiction with which a student teacher is faced. Mr. E. had advised Mary to teach in a way that would include the students, and yet, instead of leaving her to employ her own method of doing this, he had suggested that she use a teaching technique that had worked for him but which backfired completely for her. Later in the conversation she told me that after the incident, she decided to trust her own judgment and learn from her own mistakes if she made any. But she wondered if she could carry the decision through:

> M ...when you are student teaching it's hard to take initiatives. For instance, the walls in the room where I was teaching social studies were blank--too blank for a social studies classroom. I had interesting displays and collages that the students had made which I wanted to put on the walls, but I was scared. I thought that Mr. E. must have his reason for leaving those walls blank but I was afraid to ask him. I did not want to initiate the idea of putting up the displays for fear that it might be taken as an imposition. You see, they were his students, it was his classroom, not mine. It's hard not being a "real" teacher.
> (2, 20-6-91).

Mary felt that much of her fear came from the awareness that people like Mr. E. and Mrs. B. were there to judge and assess her performance, an assessment that carried a lot of weight in the final evaluation of her student teaching. She said:

> M....It (evaluation)is a power relationship, with the student teacher at the bottom...and we cannot get away from it....Perhaps dropping the evaluative part of student teaching could alleviate the problem but what's the alternative to evaluation. I mean the whole idea of student teaching is to evaluate us as qualified to teach. Unfortunately, in many cases, we are evaluated on how well we conform or fail to conform with particular orientations to teaching rather than on our own uniqueness.
> (3, 20-6-91).

Mary saw evaluation as a constraint on her behaviour as a student teacher learning to become a critically reflective practitioner. There were many initiatives she would have liked to take in her classroom as teacher and many challenges she would have loved to pose for both her co-operating teacher and her faculty advisor in the spirit of critically reflective practice, but she could not do so because she knew that her chances of getting a job after the programme depended on the type of evaluation she received during the practicum. At the time her main concern was to survive the practicum, and this meant sacrificing her own beliefs about the kind of teacher she wanted to become, and allowing her own emerging identity as a teacher to be silenced. We both identified this aspect of school practice as a constraint on a critically reflective orientation to teaching.

Theme three: Need for a programme structured to promote and accommodate critical reflection in teacher education

What emerged for Mary as a paramount requisite for critical reflection in teaching was a programme structured to encourage such reflection in the preparation of student teachers. She explained that such a programme should have a broader definition of teaching and should be counterposed to those programmes concerned only with the reproduction of teaching behaviours or which emphasized only the teacher's instructional role within the classroom.

> M. ....The underlying concern of the type of programme I am speaking about should be to enable prospective teachers to see teaching beyond an immediate narrow view of the classroom. It should be able to give student teachers the chance to participate more in curriculum matters...for instance, ask questions about teaching milieux and assume greater roles in the determination of what goes on in schools and classrooms...
>
> Y. Doesn't such a conception of teaching extend the role of the teacher to areas that we have left to other facets of education? I mean, traditionally, we have not considered matters such as milieux as the province of the teacher. We tend to limit our role as teachers to what goes on in our classrooms. Now you are suggesting that we expand that role to include areas which we consider as having, say, economic, social and political implications....Many teachers might not like to go that far...
>
> M. But if we limit our role as teacher only to our immediate classrooms that doesn't leave us much to reflect about in teaching. It will limit reflection to only our instructional roles in the classroom and whether or not this role is played out well. The educational environment is broader than the classroom and teachers should be encouraged to exercise judgment about what goes on in these broader environments. Our teacher education programmes should prepare us to exercise such judgments...
> (2, 20-6-91).

Trying to probe more specifically into the type of programme that she had in mind, I asked her whether she thought the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 course provided such a structure. She thought that in many ways the course was structured to promote and accommodate critical reflection in teaching social studies. Beginning with the curriculum Mary spoke about the programme's broader definition of teaching and the way its various components encouraged student teachers to reflect critically about their development as teachers, their classroom actions and the contexts in which these actions are embedded.

> M. We are given the chance to have a voice in the curriculum by asking us to give feedback about the course. This allows the programme to be evaluated, reconstructed or renewed and this is quite unlike the traditional programmes which are static irrespective of whether they are appropriate or not.(2, 20-6-91).

Coming from a background where the authority relationship between teachers and students would constrain critical dialogue, I had been surprised when the course instructor had given out evaluation sheets to be filled out by the students, giving their views and opinions about the programme. I had asked him about the wisdom of this idea and he had explained that the students and teachers in the programme were continuously re-examining the programme and working towards an ongoing improvement of it based on knowledge gained from evaluation and feedback. The alternative to a self-renewing programme, he had said, would be one that was closed to revision and growth. The explanation had made sense to me because I felt that a programme that was promoting critical reflection should itself be open to critical assessment by those experiencing it. Such openness between student and teacher, however, would involve changes in their relationship which would be difficult to implement. For instance, it is often difficult for teachers to relinquish their role as experts and allow their expertise to be subjected to critical examination. I mentioned this difficulty to Mary.

> Y. Perhaps my own school biography still influences the way I think about teaching. As a student I remember that we only asked questions when we did not understand something. We did not question our teachers' knowledge or expertise, let alone criticise it. The teachers themselves did not create opportunities to be evaluated. We always thought that they had immediate and unwavering knowledge. Of course I know now that such an image denies the uncertainties with which teaching is infused, and the image makes it difficult for many teachers to open themselves to criticism or evaluation by their students.
>
> M. Yes, it's funny...that the teaching milieu itself reinforces certain views. The teacher tenaciously hangs on to his or her image as expert or knower and the students do not do anything to shatter this image mainly because of fear.

She proceeded to explain the fear:

> M....Fear that if you question their (teachers') image, you'll look like a fool because, afterall, these are very experienced teachers who know what they are doing. There is also the fear that you might be given a negative evaluation if you question this image....But remaining silent breeds unquestioned conformity in teaching. We will all be like mirror images of those who teach us, with no individuality of our own.
> (2, 20-6-91).

During our third conversation Mary mentioned a glimmer of hope in this depressing scenario. It lay in what she considered as a dialogic engagement of teaching.

> M. ...but there is now more orientation towards dialogue in teaching which suggests that the teacher moves away from his or her authoritative position in the classroom and allow the learners to make a contribution to their own learning. Our course instructor does this very well. I like the way he does not impose anything on us. He calls his teaching methods "possibilities" over which students should reflect to see what they hold for us as teachers.
> (3, 20-7-91).

Mary also appreciated that the programme's structure allowed student teachers to visit their placement schools beforehand to see teaching and the school environment. These visits, she thought, provided her with the opportunity to reflect in a critical manner about many things such as the school, the students, the teachers and the teaching environment. She felt very strongly that that aspect of the programme had proved to be more useful in providing first-hand information about schools than any textbook theory could have done.

> M. I saw kids for what they really are. I sat in classes where they were taught and for the first time, the vast differences that exist in children really hit me in the face....I used to limit difference largely to racial differences because this is what mainstream society always emphasizes. But after the school visits I became aware of other differences...like some kids are really interested and want to learn, others are just the opposite and as I observed the class, I saw that those who were not interested kept disrupting the class. I saw that in the same class some kids caught things faster than others and they understood the material faster. I began to worry and think about how I'd handle such differences when I start teaching. It was quite an eye opener.
> (3, 20-7-91).

This observation of hers immediately opened between us a discussion about the individual differences which characterize classrooms everywhere. I explained to Mary that, as a high school teacher for ten years, I had never paid attention to racial difference because our classrooms in Sierra Leone are racially homogeneous but that other differences such as socio-economic backgrounds which were a determinant of learning differences, tribal differences which meant cultural differences were as much a part of lived experience in classrooms in Sierra Leone as they were in Canada. As a novice teacher, I had had to struggle with learning to work with all these differences without destroying what was important about them. Prior to this conversation I had written the first draft of a paper titled Understanding Curriculum as International Text: The Cultural Other for presentation at the JCT conference in Dayton (USA) later in the year. The impetus for the paper had been provided by the painful experience my daughter had gone through when one of her teachers had asked her to change her African name to an Anglo-sounding name "that would be easier to call in Canada". In the paper I had raised many questions about a teacher education programme that did not adequately prepare student teachers to deal with pedagogical issues such as the numerous differences which existed among children in contemporary classrooms. I had argued that as a consequence of such failure, novice teachers entered the teaching profession under the illusion of finding completely homogeneous classrooms where teaching was easily carried out. Using my paper as a focal point, Mary and I briefly debated the pros and cons of putting too much emphasis on "difference" or "otherness" in teacher education courses. She agreed with me that during teacher education student teachers should be made aware of the "otherness" of the students they were going to face when they started teaching but she also argued that:

> M. ....If too much emphasis is put on pointing out students' individual differences in teacher education classes the student teachers might be consumed by it and come to forget that certain homogeneities also exist among students, such as similar teenage problems...and our common humanity. Being made aware of "difference" in the classroom is one thing; emphasizing it has its own disadvantages...

> ....I still think that "difference" in the classroom is a discovery which student teachers should make for themselves when they are in the field and learn to deal with then through thoughtful reflection. I think that visiting schools beforehand was an effective way of confronting us with these differences. For me, especially, it provided quite a lot to think about.
> (3, 20-7-91).

Our discussion about the structure of the programme then proceeded to another aspect which promoted critical reflection in teaching for Mary.

> M. .....It was mainly the journal writing which did it. Writing about my experiences in school and later sharing these with Brian really helped me. When I am writing in my journal, I am usually quite critical about myself as teacher. I ask myself questions like: Why did I choose to teach this particular lesson in this way?. How did it go?. How else could I have taught it?....It gives me the chance to reflect upon not only how I do things but more importantly why I do them. The reflection occurs both before and after my teaching.
>
> I usually set myself goals such as how to relate to my students and my colleagues, etc. At the end of the day, through my dialogue journal, I'd reflect whether or not these goals have been achieved.
> (3, 20-7-91).

Right from the beginning of the course the instructor had required that student teachers keep a journal in which they recorded their thoughts about their teaching acts and professional growth. The journals were to be shared with dialogue partners and the course instructor on a regular basis for written feedback and response. As well as providing a vehicle for systematically and critically reflecting on their development as teachers, their teaching behaviours and the wider context of teaching, the journals were also intended to provide the instructor with information about what the student teachers thought about his own teaching performance. As a vehicle for critical reflection, many of the students in that course had thought that daily journal writing was time consuming and that they did not have to write a journal to be able to reflect. For Mary, however, this argument did not seem to carry much weight as she quickly pointed out when I raised the issue.

> Y. On several occasions I have overheard your colleagues complaining about the lack of time to write in their journals. Some complain that they do not even receive meaningful responses from their dialogue partners...

> M. Yes, I agree that this difficulty could arise if you did mundane entries in your journal every day like I used to. Now, I enter only incidents that provoke critical reflection for me, for example, a particular classroom problem and how to address it. My first dialogue partner's journal used to read like a catalogue of activities she carried out in school every day...and it was kind of difficult to respond seriously to such banality. I was glad when Brian became my journal partner...we both wrote only what was worth writing about regarding teaching ....I do my journal in a way that I really enjoy and Brian's responses are well thought out.
> (3, 20-7-91).

For Mary, journal writing did not have to be a chore that one painfully went through every day. To make her dialogue journal interesting her entries mainly focused around teaching issues about which she raised questions and which required reflection. Reading through her journal for this study I found out that she had written about issues such as her relationships with her co-operating teacher, her students, the difficult times she had had with her faculty advisor and the strategies she would use to teach certain social studies topics without imposing her own values on the students. For instance, several journal entries referred progressively to one of her students who was not only failing to turn in social studies assignments but was also defensive in a rude kind of way when Mary asked her about these assignments. She had been angry with this student at first, believing that she was deliberately trying to make life difficult for the teacher. Thinking more deeply about the problem and deciding to talk to her co-operating teacher about it, the journal revealed that Mary was able to learn that the student had left her parents' home a few months earlier and was going through a period of difficulty and instability. Thereafter, Mary came to look at this student's behaviour in a completely different light. I was left with the impression that her journal had actually aided critical reflection in teaching social studies for her.

Theme four: Personal and professional growth through reflection on practice

Throughout our conversations what emerged as a common theme in almost all the topics that we covered was the personal and professional growth which Mary said she experienced as a result of making critical reflection an integral element of her teaching. A few weeks earlier she had asked me for any literature that I might have about how one could become a reflective teacher and I had given her a paper titled Reflections on Reflective Practice by Terrance Carson. Like Mary, I had been searching for definite techniques of reflective teaching and specific teaching methods that were critically reflective. Carson's paper had helped me understand that there was no wisdom in prescribing absolute methods in reflective practice. What was needed was an openness in our teaching to alternative world views and a pedagogical attunement to the students whom we teach. In this sense critical reflection is a more a way of being than a set of prescriptions for solving teaching problems. As we discussed the Carson paper during this final conversation Mary came to view critical reflection more in terms of her own growth as teacher.

> M. Critical reflection, as I see it, is assuming a thoughtful attitude towards whatever one does as a teacher, whether that doing is related to one's classroom instruction or other broader notions of teaching. I find myself reflecting constantly on how and why I do the things that I do in school. As a result Teacher Four where I am at now has come a long way indeed from Teacher One when I just started out.
>
> .... I really learned a lot from that course. Before we started, the course was just another part of my programme to get a teaching qualification and I just wanted to get it over with. But it turned out to be one of my most rewarding experiences here. It has taught me many things, like collegiality, collaboration and the B.I.T.S. (bright ideas in teaching) were fantastic. They helped us all learn how to share our teaching ideas with colleagues.
>
> ... and then the call-back session from the schools was also very useful. It was reassuring to share our common teaching problems and discuss how we could deal with them. That was the reflective part...to be able to think about addressing teaching problems on our own without relying on our instructor or textbooks. I

> think I have grown a lot professionally and I want to be a teacher and I will continue to be critically reflective in my teaching.
> (3, 20-7-91).

Rick

Rick was also a student teacher in the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme. He had attended a teachers' college for two years before transferring to the University of Alberta to continue his B.Ed. degree. Though still very young he was one of the few students in the programme who was married and had a family. He told me during our first conversation that he had always loved teaching but that this feeling had been reinforced during one of his college courses, critical theory. By looking at teaching through the eyes of critical theory he had come to see much of school knowledge as consisting of "deliberate attempts by the system" to promote particular views while omitting others. He wanted to introduce his students to a whole new culture of teaching, a world out there of which they were ignorant because of the way school knowledge was presented to them. After this disclosure, I mentally labeled him as the "constructivist mediator" (Henderson, 1992) ready and willing to deconstruct and mediate the curriculum with his students in the spirit of critical pedagogy. Just how he was going to do this successfully within the established school culture remained a perplexity to me and I could not wait to find out. In class, Rick rarely spoke but when he did, his contributions were usually well-thought-out arguments defending whatever position he was taking on an issue.

After observing him in class for several weeks I decided that I would ask him to become one of the participants in my study but because we had never spoken to one another at a personal level, I found it difficult to broach the topic about my research with him. Fortunately, he came up to me one day during coffee break and started a conversation with me. During the conversation he asked me how I was hoping to gather information about critical reflection in teaching by simply sitting in their classes every day. I explained to him that I was looking for three student teachers to work with me to find out the meaning of critical reflection and its relationship to teaching based on their experiences during the course. I went on to ask him to become one of the three students and, being a modest person, he replied that he did not think he knew enough to help me. This was in January, 1991 and I told him that at that time, I myself did not know enough to know even the questions that I would be asking participants but that we could work together to explore the meaning of critically reflective practice. He remarked that the course outline had said something about aiming at preparing critically reflective teachers but he still had not grasped what it was all about. We were in the course from January to April and by the time I gave Rick a copy of the questions which would guide the research, he felt ready to work with me in our mutual search into the meaning and relevance of critical reflection to teaching. By then he was doing his teaching practicum at one of Edmonton's high schools where he was teaching social studies in grades 10 & 11.

Because Rick and I had already had a number of exploratory conversations about the research topic I was ready with a tape recorder for the first of our three research conversations when he arrived in my office during the afternoon of April 10, 1991. This first conversation which lasted for approximately one hour and ten minutes, covered many topics ranging from his view about teaching before experiencing the course, through his experiences of learning to become a teacher, to the way he thought teaching could be made a democratic endeavour involving critical inquiry in the classroom. Two subsequent conversations, each of forty five minutes duration followed the first and, like I had done in the case of Mary, I would summarize each conversation and come up with themes and questions which I would give to Rick prior to our next conversation.

My first conversation with him started with a focus on the experiences of learning how to teach and the difficulty of managing a critically reflective stance during these experiences. I started by asking him about the views he had had about teaching before going through the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme. Rick told me that even before deciding to become a teacher and entering teachers' college, he knew that teaching was not an easy job. His elder brother was a teacher and from what he had seen from him he had known that teaching required much more commitment than many other professions. Contrary to Mary's initial opinion about teaching being a straightforward job, he knew beforehand that teaching was not a job that anyone could do because it involved many complexities and his own experiences during the practicum had confirmed this view.

> Y. What view did you have about teaching before?
>
> R. I did not consider teaching an easy option in the job market and I did not choose to be a teacher because I thought teaching was easy....My brother was a teacher and so I knew what was involved....I considered it (teaching) a complex art, something special...all that patience, the relationships and interactions, the hard work...these are not something that anyone can possess. You either have them or be in for a rough ride in teaching.
>
> .... It is not a nine to five job, even on the bus or at home you are still a teacher....When I entered Red Deer college, I became even more determined that I would do it.
> (1, 10-4-91)

As we pursued Rick's conscious choice to become a teacher in this first conversation we were led into issues that involved various dimensions of teaching ranging from the technical to moral, ethical implications of teaching, which inevitably took us into the view of teaching as critically reflective practice. He was critical of what he saw as a "traditional" approach to teaching which he thought suffocated genuine education because it was so constraining and one-dimensional. He spoke about his own experiences as a student and the boring repetition by some of his teachers of what was already in the course textbooks instead of a critical engagement of that information, and he had vowed that when he became a teacher, he would move his students away from such "lifeless" experiences and try out alternative teaching methods.

> R. I said to myself, "there are other ways of teaching that engage the students and the teacher together. I did not believe in the one-way flow of knowledge that some people refer to as teaching.
> (2, 10-4-91).

By the time of our second conversation, however, Rick had revealed how he had found out from classroom experience that the best of intentions could be thwarted or sacrificed on the altar of routinization or bureaucratic constraints in teaching.

The second conversation also addressed the difficulty of experimenting critically reflective teaching within a prescribed curriculum. Rick perceived this difficulty as one of the reasons why many teachers preferred to teach curriculum in an unproblematic manner. We also spoke about the importance of grounding critical reflection in an activity such as action research, which led us into a discussion of the way student teachers personally experienced theory and practice in teaching. During the third conversation Rick brought out the need for a supportive atmosphere in which student teachers could engage and experiment with critically reflective teaching activities.

The twenty eight topics that emerged during the course of our three conversations about critical reflection as it relates to the teaching of social studies were narrowed down to four themes as a result of rigorous interpretive analyses. The four themes presented below relate to Rick's sense of what for him is essentially critically reflective practice and how it could be encouraged in the discourses and practices of teaching.

1. Critical reflection as questioning and a democratic classroom environment
2. Constraints on being critically reflective within a set curriculum
3. Need for reflection to be grounded
4. A supportive milieu promotes a critically reflective orientation

Theme one: Critical reflection as questioning and a democratic classroom environment

What Rick found most challenging about the social studies curriculum for his grades 10 & 11 classes was that it was aimed at preparing students for "responsible citizenship". While some of his colleagues found it constraining that an already prescribed set of definitions had been given in the curriculum to be espoused in the classroom as necessary for teaching kids to become responsible citizens, Rick felt that, on the contrary, such prescriptions provided an opportunity for deconstructing curricular ideas through student discussions in his classroom.

> R. I tend to see them (curricular prescriptions) as an opportunity for my class to question their validity, truth claims and omissions in open classroom discussions. It is what I consider a democracy in teaching...
> (2, 18-6-91).

For a few minutes, the conversation centred around the concept of "democracy", with me arguing that it was difficult to use the term "democratic" to describe anything because "democracy" was such an imprecise and continuously developing social concept. Rick clarified what he meant by "democracy in teaching":

> R. What I mean is not accepting curricular perspectives without questioning them. Take the concept of "responsible citizenship" for example. When I read the knowledge objectives of "responsible citizenship" the impression I get is that of the good citizen who believes in and promotes what we in democratic countries consider as desirable values. But to me the meaning of "responsible citizenship "goes" beyond such a definition. He or she is also a critic, someone who is willing and ready to participate in the improvement of his or her country by considering alternatives. This view is somehow missing in the curriculum.
>
> .....A democratic classroom, for instance, would mean creating opportunities for the students to see beyond what is given in their texts and pay attention to what is omitted...and for me, this is where critical reflection plays an important role. The more I read curricular texts and think about them, the more I see it as my moral responsibility to tell both sides of the story when I teach... the story of the explicit curriculum and that which is not said. (2, 18-6-91).

I felt that this was a really powerful explication of Rick's position on curriculum matters and the fact that he saw it as an example of teaching in a critically reflective way struck me as impressive. Henderson (1992) describes the reflective practitioner as one who demonstrates an "ethic of caring" (p.2.) manifested in his or her critical perspective over such issues as language and individual and social construction of meaning. In speaking this way, Rick seemed to be demonstrating an ethic of caring as a critically reflective teacher by digging beneath the surface of the curriculum and confirming his students by making them a part of this inquiring exercise. In my interpretive remarks on this aspect of our conversation I attempted to express my own uneasiness about how teachers seemed to treat curricular content unproblematically, indicative of the taken-for-granted way in which they saw the curriculum. Conducting this research among teachers, I found out that, as teachers, many of the participants desired to be in a more pedagogical relationship with their students by employing the "open-ended" teaching methods that Rick had spoken about but this desire was often obscured by an anxiety to do what was expected of them by the curriculum "experts". My remark served as the starting point of our second conversation a few weeks later. When we met Rick started the conversation by commenting on it:

> R. I found your remark (about teachers treating the curriculum unproblematically) interesting. But I can think of several other reasons why teachers might find it hard to adopt a more open way of relating to knowledge...
>
> Y. Yes, I am sure there are. For instance, questioning or challenging the curriculum might be interpreted as a refusal on the part of teachers to accept school structures and this might indicate that the teacher does not believe in the system in which he or she is working...and if this is the case, he or she had better not be there at all.
>
> R. It also has to do with the way in which many teachers were taught when they were students themselves. They might not be familiar with other methods apart from the traditional transmission of knowledge which they went through. Also in most cases the school structure itself can stand in the way to alternative ways of doing our job as teachers. I have found this quite frustrating on occasion. (2, 18-6-91).

Rick then went on to explain to me that he had done a bit of critical theory in one of his university courses (Anthropology in Education) and during his practicum he had attempted to bring some of the critical thinking ideas of Peter McLaren and Henry Giroux to bear upon his own teaching in his grade 11 social studies class. This meant that he did not profess to have immutable answers in class and, as part of his "democratic" approach to curriculum, he encouraged his students to question and challenge curricular ideas. But because approaching teaching in this way contested well-established ways of relating to knowledge in the classroom, this became a struggle between his own personal convictions about teaching and the "authoritative discourses" (Britzman, 1991) that are imbibed in the world of teaching. As an inexperienced teacher he had failed to realize that institutional imperatives and constraints could produce practices that betray one's deepest beliefs about practice and lead one to replicate the very practices that one sets out to oppose. As a result, Rick was forced to revert back to an already institutionally preferred way of teaching.

What made the struggle even more difficult and perplexing was that the students themselves did not believe in this open-ended approach to curriculum. They were used to more power, control and certainty from the teacher, rather than a revelation of the teacher's vulnerability and uncertainty. It was very quickly leading to loss of respect for him by his students who were well aware that school discourses did not work that way. This only led Rick to more frustration and questions as revealed in his dialogue journal:

> ....Are my grade elevens a little too young to fully understand and participate in this mode of learning? Or are they simply accustomed to seeing teaching as transmission of certain knowledge which reinforces the view of the teacher as the possessor of knowledge.?...Is my critical approach to knowledge suitable for the students' maturity level or is my approach only suitable for higher levels of education. (Journal entry of March 10, 1991).

We ended this facet of our conversation with a question that neither of us wanted to answer: What kind of relationship to knowledge exists when vulnerability, uncertainty and doubt are denied in teaching?

Theme two: Difficulty of being a critically reflective teacher within curricular constraints

This second theme emerged as we continued our discussion about the unproblematic way in which teachers taught the curriculum of social studies. For Rick, who had a background in readings from critical theory, the curriculum was a social construction developed to promote and maintain particular knowledge interests. Presenting curriculum as a neutral course of study prevents a critical reading and understanding of how curriculum functions in the teaching-learning process. While Rick saw "democratic" education as every teacher being duty-bound to deconstruct the knowledge that inheres in the curriculum to reveal it as a social construction, he remains aware of the difficulty involved in doing so.

> R. ....Take a topic like World War 1 in social studies 20. There is a lot of emphasis on factual content about the war in the curriculum, for instance, who started the war, dates and various battles fought. This limits questions about WW1 to factual knowledge...
>
> Y. I agree but there is also room for the caring teacher to play around with a topic like WW1 to make it problematic for the students. For example, when I taught WW1 in high school several years ago I managed to focus attention on the imperialistic intentions of the powerful nations involved in the war rather than presenting it as a natural competition between super powers as the textbook was saying...
>
> R. I'm sure that many conscientious teachers would like to do likewise but are afraid to deviate from the curriculum material. Besides, there is also time constraint to consider. At a level like grade 12, you are working within a curricular mandate to cover certain materials within a specific time limit for the national examinations. The more you adopt a problematic approach to teaching the material the less time you have to cover the material...and you have the responsibility to the students to cover the material...but in a way you also have the responsibility to teach the students to go beyond an essentialist interpretation of history. Most teachers feel more obliged to cover the curriculum.
> (2, 18-6-91).

Our discussion at this stage turned to teaching circumstances in Sierra Leone as I attempted to explain briefly that, apart from curricular and examination constraints, it was also possible that teachers who wished to avoid the "messiness" of teaching could adopt an unproblematic approach to curriculum.

> Y. Teaching was carried out in this unproblematic and unambiguous manner in my country during the colonial era. Linda McNeil calls it "defensive teaching", in which the teacher presents textbook knowledge as a simple unproblematic fact that cannot be questioned. The colonialists taught this way to avoid any critical thinking and transformational activities on the part of the learners. Even though we are now independent, those teachers who wish to reduce teaching demands and maintain classroom order adopt this approach.
>
> R. The same thing is happening here in Canada. Many teachers avoid explosive situations by remaining faithful to the curriculum material and not challenging it in any way and I cannot consider that as teaching in a real sense. O.K. so the material

> is covered but in the process meaningful education is disregarded for the sake of an appearance of progress...
> (2, 18-6-91).

Rick went on to mention another curricular tension which student teachers have to deal with when they go out on their teaching practica. Student teachers have the double duty of confronting their own individual experiences with curricular content and having to help their students do likewise within a curricular context that stifles critical and reflective thought.

> R. ....As well as struggling to make a connection between our own lived experiences and the curriculum, we also have to help our students make a similar connection. It's a huge demand on any beginning teacher which many people seem to be unaware of.
> (2, 18-6-91).

But despite the curious absence of the complexity of this demand on student teachers in reflective teacher education discourses, Rick remains essentially hopeful that as student teachers struggle their way through the body of traditions imbricated in teaching they will come to realize that teaching is, above all, an ethical encounter between themselves and their students, and therefore, within the constraints they experience, they will find a way of living up to this responsibility. He expressed this hope during our final conversation.

> R. I am hopeful that through critical reflection on practice, we might come to see what we are doing that is inappropriate and strive towards what is desirable in teaching.
> (3, 20-7-91).

Theme three: Need for critical reflection to be grounded

Certain educators have argued that critical reflection cannot be limited to an abstract or psychological ideal and, in a bid to move beyond such ideal, teacher educators (e.g., Zeichner, 1987; Roth, 1989; Gitlin, 1989) have advocated that critical reflection in teaching be grounded in concrete practice. Rick found this concreteness in journal writing and the action research project which he carried out during his teaching practicum. While he acknowledged that journal writing promoted critical reflection for him in a personal way, he saw action research doing much more in the promotion of critical reflection in teaching.

> R. My journal was my own private possession in which I berated and criticized myself, ...and wrote about how I could have done things better in my teaching. But action research has a wider scope. You involve other people...you perceive a problem you want to address by doing something about it. The action research cycle actually helped me do a lot of reflection. You plan, act, observe, reflect and then you go through the cycle again and as you do this, you get plenty of feedback at the observation stage about which to think.
>
> Y. What was your action research topic?
>
> R. "How can I help my students construct their own meaning?" It's interesting that that problem had bothered me a lot in my teaching. I wanted my students to learn from their own ideas...to relate what they were learning to what they already knew. They were having a problem doing this and I was worried about it, so when the action research project came up, I said to myself that I could spend the next four weeks trying to get them to make this connection.
>
> Y. How did you go about doing this?
>
> R. I spoke to my co-operating teacher and she was very supportive and became my "critical friend" We worked together with the students in social studies 13 in two cycles. I made the students write in journals in which they were required to relate what they had learned in class on a particular day to their own experiences. It was rewarding to both sides. The students were able to explore their own ideas and thus contribute to their learning and, as their confidence increased, they began to participate more frequently in class. Through their journals I was able to reflect on what was happening in the classroom.
> (2, 18-6-91).

In my interpretive remarks, I focused on the importance of this type of practitioner-derived knowledge from reflective inquiry, comparing it with technicism which assumes the existence of an external and reliable body of knowledge about teaching that can be used to inform practice. I also commented that critically reflective inquiry, such as action research, enabled teachers to theorize about their practice, which came as a bit of surprise to Rick. As a student teacher theory seemed to him as an abstracted process, divorced from his lived experience and dispensed in teacher education classes in language that separated it from his reality. This point led us into exploring the way in which theory and practice are understood by those learning to teach.

> Y. I know that as a beginning teacher theories about teaching always appear as belonging to textbooks, university researchers and other external authorities but never to the teacher. Theories are also projected as ready-made explanations of teaching problems, until you start teaching and discover that they fail to stand up to classroom reality. You find out, for instance, that individual differences in your students throw out all those theories which tend to homogenize them...
>
> R. Yes...as soon as you are in the classroom you see evidence of the theories not working. But, as a beginning teacher, you go through a lot of doubt, even doubting yourself. You say to yourself, "It has to be me because the textbooks cannot be wrong"...and then again you say, "No I don't think I am wrong. This theory clearly does not work in the case of this particular student.
> (2, 18-6-91).

A long-winded discussion then followed about the separation of theory from practice in the technicist view of teaching, something which completely excluded the voices and experiences of classroom teachers. A person like Rick learning to teach would experience this separation in the form of uncertainty and self-doubt. As our conversation progressed, Rick came to see that to theorize about practice required not much more than engaging one's reflective capacity to be the author of that practice. He saw action research as one way of narrowing the gap between theory and practice and a means by which practitioners can see themselves as authors of their own experience, thereby dissipating the view that theory is something that can only be received.

> R. .... Like we were saying, when my research was completed I could have come up with a research report or theory about how students construct their own meanings and how this helps their self-esteem and improves their participation in class and in school. I think that this approach to research could give a lot of confidence and authority to teachers. The question remains, however, whether we as teachers are willing to take over our practice in this way.
> (2, 18-6-91).

But despite Rick's optimism about action research as a means of grounding critical reflection in practice and dealing with the theory-practice gap, he did not remain unaware of the problems associated with doing action research as a student teacher. He mentioned a few of such problems during our third conversation.

> R. ....Like I said here, for instance, (pointing to the summary of our second conversation) there is the problem of time to fully carry out the research in a meaningful way. On the occasions that we met to do the research, we did so after school and the students were not always willing to wait. As a student teacher, there are too many things requiring your time and attention. Also I found it difficult to find colleagues to participate in the research.... And many of my friends did not even have a question to address in their action research projects because they did not think they had enough experience or were familiar enough with the school or with the students to identify problems...
> (3, 28-7-91).

In the light of all the difficulties he was pointing out, I asked Rick what suggestion he would make about the place of action research in the programme.

> R. It (action research) definitely helped ground and focus my reflection and, as we have discussed, it is useful in bringing theory and practice together. But I am not sure about its place in a teacher education programme....I mean, I would not like to see it scrapped...but I'd be more ready for it in two years when I have had a bit more teaching experience.
> (3, 28-7-91).

In my reflective comments on this aspect of our conversation I noted that if action research was to be retained as a crucial component of a teacher education programme aimed at promoting critical reflection, serious thoughts had to be given to what level in the programme it should be introduced in order to enable student teachers to accommodate it more conveniently.

Theme four: Need for a milieu that supports critical reflection in teaching

Rick felt that he had been able to do many of the things he regarded as related to critically reflective practice because of the support he had received from his co-operating teacher and faculty advisor. Considering that teachers' perception of classrooms is usually limited to utilitarian understandings, he had been pleasantly surprised at his co-operating teacher's broader view of the teacher's role.

> R. Shelly (his co-operating teacher) was really great. I was lucky to have a co-operating teacher and a faculty advisor who are working towards the goals of reflective practice. For instance, one day I was teaching "Economic Development and Interdependence in Social 20 and I was using the RAFT method to teach it. Shelly came to observe the class a few minutes after I had started. I was a bit nervous because it was the first time I was using the RAFT approach in my class. I thought she was going to ask me to cut it out, or criticize me later for using it. But she did not. She was really supportive of it and said it was a new method which she was glad to learn with the kids. We spoke about my nervousness afterwards and she said it was O.K. to feel unsure when one was trying something new. She was a great confidence booster.
> (2, 18-6-91).

Rick went on to explain that this open-mindedness of his co-operating teacher's was what was needed in order to encourage neophyte teachers to try out new things in the classroom. Many other teachers might have required him to employ a teaching strategy that they had tested out but Shelly had stood back and allowed him to exercise professional judgment about what he considered as the best way of teaching global interdependence and economic development. In this way, the broader role of the teacher as both technician and professional decision-maker had been confirmed.

Rick had also been impressed by the way in which Shelly had allowed him to question her about some of the things she was doing in class. Given the formal authority relationships that often existed between student teachers and their cooperating teachers, student teachers rarely ventured to question the reasons and rationales underlying the teaching behaviours of their co-operating teachers. Even when certain co-operating teachers actively encouraged them to do so, student teachers often failed to ask questions for fear that their questions might be interpreted as criticism. Shelly, however, had made it easy for Rick to ask her questions.

> R. ...for instance, she would often say, "Do you know why I did this?." and when I asked her why, she would throw the ball right back into my court and say, "Why do you think I did it."...and then we would analyze the reasons together. She gave me the confidence to discuss anything with her...

3, 28-7-91).

The conversation addressed in further detail the free rein that Shelly had given to him over almost everything that occurred in the classroom while he was there, including matters concerning disciplinary measures for students who behaved in undesirable ways in the classroom.

> R. Paul was a talkative. I mean he never shut up. I spoke to Shelly about him and she told me that she usually let him sit in a special corner during her lessons, away from the other kids. But she said it was up to me how I chose to handle him.
>
> ....I thought that to single Paul out to sit in a special corner would make him a bit too self-conscious and that might have the opposite effect. That night I debated several alternatives in my mind. The first alternative was to have a heart to heart talk with Paul, telling him that he was disturbing the other students and my teaching with his incessant talking. I chose the lunch period to talk to him and, guess what?. It worked. He became more attentive in class.
> (3, 28-7-91).

Rick indicated that by going to Shelly in the first place, he wanted to rely on her advice as the substantive teacher of Paul's class to solve a disciplinary problem. Instead of providing him with solutions, she had thrown the responsibility back on him, thus giving him the chance to be a professional decision-maker once again.

He had received a similar support from his faculty advisor who was also one of the university instructors in the programme.

> R. One day my faculty advisor came into my class. I was doing a lecture which I did not usually do. But that day I needed to do it to provide some factual background around which a class discussion could be built. I meant to make it short but, somehow, it dragged on. I saw that he was uncomfortable and I began to panic inside me. During my reflective session with him later, he asked me why I had used the lecture method and I explained that it was meant as a background to the actual lesson which was to be a class discussion. I got away with it. You know, it is good when they (the teaching supervisors) ask you why you had done certain things, then you can explain yourself before they assess your teaching.
>
> Y. It's sometimes hard though, to have the course instructor as your faculty advisor, especially when you do things which they had advised against during the course. For instance, when you were lecturing when he walked in...

> R. That could well be, but then he never said to us, "Don't use this or that specific teaching method", so we were free to make our own choices so long as we had carefully thought about why we had made them.
>
> ....I liked the reflective sessions he and I had after I finished teaching a lesson. They were similar to Shelly's. He was not only concerned with the way I had done things in class but more with why I had done them. He would then go beyond that and discuss with me how else I could have approached a particular topic. I learned a lot from their evaluation and my sessions with them.
> (3, 28-7-91).

The need for a strong and reliable support to share insights, solve problems and provide technical and professional advice was, for Rick, a crucial requirement as he embarked on the journey to an alternative way of engaging practice within a milieu which still promotes policies that encourage conformist orientations to practice.

Yashmine

Like Mary and Rick, Yashmine was also a student in the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme. She and her parents had emigrated from Fiji to Canada when she was five years old and, unlike Mary who came to Canada when she was old enough to remember quite vividly life in classrooms in the Philippines, Yashmine left her homeland when she was too young to remember what it was like to go to school in Fiji. In Canada, even though she carried memories of a few teachers who made learning really interesting for her through meaningful classroom activities, she also remembered that the vast majority of her teachers had been somehow unwilling to trust the students to successfully carry out independent research or projects on their own and were usually content with directing students about what was to be done in class. Even though she told me that, as a teacher, she wished to avoid the type of controlling classroom atmosphere she had experienced as a student she firmly believed that her teacher education programme should provide her with teaching skills and techniques to be applied in the classroom.

What I remember most about her was the enthusiasm with which she volunteered to participate in my research, even without my asking her. The course instructor had introduced me on the first day of the class as a foreign student from Africa doing research into the meaning of critical reflection and its relationship to teaching, and Yashmine had come up to me right after class that day and offered her willingness to participate because, as she told me, she had heard a lot about critical reflection in teaching and she thought it would be beneficial for her to explore its meaning with someone who was as interested as she was to know more about this orientation to teaching.

I accepted her offer but at the time, deep down in my heart, I would have preferred to make my own choice of participants. However, as the course progressed, I became more and more convinced that I wanted Yashmine as a participant. For one thing, she sometimes expressed views about teacher education that appeared to be diametrically opposed to the view of practice that critical reflection practice was promoting. I thought it would be interesting to explore such views further as part of my study.

During the month of January, 1991, Yashmine and I shared many lunch hours together, sometimes going down to the students' cafeteria for a sandwich and sometimes simply staying in the classroom and chatting over drinks. I gave her a copy of my research questions (conversation openers) at the beginning of March when she was doing her teaching practicum at a high school where she was teaching social studies in grades 10 & 11. Because of her busy teaching schedule at that time we could not meet immediately but by mid April we were able to speak on the phone and schedule our first research conversation for April 15, 1991. In all, we had three research conversations in my office between April 15 and August 16 and each lasted for about fifty minutes. Each conversation was tape recorded, transcribed and summarized. The summaries, along with the themes and the related questions that had emerged, were given to her and they served as topics for discussion during our next conversation.

We began our first conversation with a discussion of what Teacher One (before experiencing the programme) had been like for Yashmine. She told me that she did not enter the programme completely ignorant about the teacher's work and responsibility. She had spent a year teaching adolescents with learning disorders in a special education programme in British Columbia. As a result, she had realistic views about teaching and her decision to enter the University of Alberta to pursue a degree in teaching was one she had come to after spending a long time thinking about various careers. From experience, she knew that it was not easy to be a teacher but despite the difficulties involved, she saw teaching as a job that was challenging and rewarding in ways that were not always explicit. Before teaching the special education students, however, Yashmine's views about teaching had been somehow idealized and simplistic.

> Yash. ....When you watch teachers teaching you for half your life, you tend to think that the teacher's job is easy and simple. Before teaching those kids in B.C. I thought that teaching was an easy job. I did not think that it was a difficult job requiring a large amount of background preparation and a special kind of personality.

She explained "a special kind of personality":

> Yash. I mean by a special kind of personality, for example, that you cannot afford to be temperamental, and even when you have your down days as a human being, you still have to remain cheerful and pleasant for the sake of the kids. You have to be able to deal with the unexpected from them...that to me requires a special personality.
>
> .....When I started teaching the special education kids my naiveté started disappearing. I found that you cannot just get up in the morning and go to class and start teaching like I had thought. You should have spent a fair amount of time preparing what you have to teach, how you plan to teach it and spend time evaluating the lesson, even if mentally. Sometimes a lesson which I had planned to finish in one period stretched into two or three periods...and so you learn not to stick strictly to lesson plans but to go with the flow of the lesson....You also find out that you do not know enough content to teach effectively and that you need to go to college. All these things changed the way I used to think about teaching.

I asked her what she remembered most about teaching the special education kids.

> Yash. What comes to mind easily about my experience with the special education kids is the differences I saw among them. Even though they all had what was labeled as "learning disorders" they were all different. Some had learning problems that were more severe than others; some had "attention deficiency"; some could not arrange letters to spell words correctly; others seemed normal to me because their performance in class was no different from that of some "normal" kids that I had sat with in class when I was going to school. I sometimes wondered what such kids were doing in a special education programme.
> (1, 15-4-91).

Yashmine's earlier simplistic view of teaching was not unlike mine several years ago, or that of the student teachers I had taught in Sierra Leone before coming to Canada. Anyone who has ever been to school is familiar with the teacher's work as a result of years of observing what the teacher does in the classroom. Unfortunately, students do not bestow this work with any complexity beyond such simple and straightforward tasks as pouring knowledge into students, struggling to maintain classroom discipline and grading papers. This simplistic view later shapes the teaching biographies of student teachers who find out when they start teaching that the world of teaching has overwhelming complexities that they had not understood. Some drop out of teacher education programmes once they are faced with this complexity, but for Yashmine such complexity provided the challenge which spurred her on to pursue a career in this daunting profession. As she told me,

> Yash. I saw it (teaching) as a challenge, you know, having a good feeling when a kid is able to do something right as a result of my teaching him or her. That's the implicit reward--that I have contributed to that kid's becoming, though there is no way of measuring such contribution. I made many mistakes with those kids in B.C. but I was able to learn from those mistakes and I have avoided repeating them during my teaching practicum here.
> (1, 15-4-91).

We touched on twenty five topics during our three conversations and out of these, three themes emerged based on some of the contradictory ways in which Yashmine experienced critical reflection in teaching. These were:

1. Student teachers' need for teaching techniques on which to reflect
2. Making teaching an ethical endeavour through critical reflection
3. The constraints of evaluation on critically reflective practice for student teachers

Theme one: Student teachers' need for teaching techniques on which to reflect

The outline of the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme had said that the course was not intended to provide students with specific techniques and methods for direct application to specific classrooms and that the university seminars were designed to help students broaden their perspectives on teaching, consider the rationales underlying alternative possibilities for classroom and pedagogy and assess their own developing perspectives towards teaching. For Yashmine, however, this approach to teacher education was insufficient to adequately prepare student teachers learning to teach. She had come into the programme with a technicist orientation, expecting to receive recipes to be applied to teaching and classroom management problems. Her disappointment over what she considered as the failure of the programme to fulfill this expectation came out very clearly during our first conversation.

> Yash. After four weeks of classes, I went to the teaching practicum as ignorant about teaching techniques as I had been before the course started. I did not even know how to draw a lesson plan. I had to look in the library or at what other student were doing....We needed to be told how to deal with certain classroom problems but we were left to learn things on our own.
>
> ....We did a little work on evaluation procedures but it was not enough. We needed more.
> (1, 15-4-91).

I thought that Yashmine's comments contradicted what I had understood to be the intention and orientation of the programme. I knew there was some validity in her argument that, as they enter their initial years of teaching, student teachers do need some fundamental teaching skills which would make them more comfortable and less vulnerable in the classroom. But I also knew that the turn towards critical reflection was a direct response to the unabated criticism about the shortcomings of a heavy reliance on the applied science model of teacher education which countered vulnerability by prescribing technical solutions to teaching problems. Yashmine's comments pointed to the dilemma which the course instructors had experienced. They had been torn between providing techniques and strategies for teaching and dealing with classroom problems, like Yashmine was demanding, and holding back in order to allow the student teachers to see teaching as problematic with no unambiguous answers. They had attempted to address the dilemma by modeling specific techniques in their seminars and asking the student teachers to reflect on them for possibilities for their own teaching. I pointed this out to Yashmine.

> Y. Traditional teacher education has focused mainly on techniques which student teachers should master to be able to teach "effectively". There has been little or no reflection on the way in which or the reasons why these techniques are employed. The EDSEC 375/6 course models techniques but the emphasis is on critical reflection in employing them. Don't you think it's a good idea not to prescribe specific methods but give an opportunity to student teachers to deal with their teaching problems by confronting them in reflective inquiry to arrive at ways of addressing them?
>
> Yash. That is like leaving each of us to drown in our own idiosyncrasies. O.K., I agree that critical reflection is great in everything one does. I have always been a reflective person, though I have never recorded my reflections in a journal. But if you are new in the teaching profession, what do you reflect upon? If you do have a few techniques at hand, you could start from there...
> (1, 15-4-91).

As I listened to her the questions in my mind were: Why this overwhelming reliance on pre-given answers to teaching problems? Was it due to the illusion of technique which fosters the false belief that better methods and techniques reduce insecurity and vulnerability in teaching? Even though Yashmine had told me earlier that she now saw teaching as a much more complex job, this complexity, for her, did not extend to decision making by the teacher through critical reflection on practice. Yet during our second conversation she seemed visibly disturbed as she recounted the way in which her co-operating teacher had controlled her teaching during her practicum.

> Yash. ....He was very controlling and I was getting the message that I was expected to teach in his own way, using methods that had worked for him. Perhaps because the kids were used to his own way of teaching, he was afraid that

> if I tried something new or different it might not go too well, but I was there to develop my own teaching style...
> (2, 21-6-91).

The contradiction in her statements surprised had me. If she was trying to develop her own style as a teacher, why had she expected to be given teaching recipes by the course instructor? I mentioned this contradiction to her and this was how she defended her position:

> Yash. What I needed was to be taught useful teaching skills by the course instructor and some direction from my cooperating teacher. This is different from controlling my actions as a teacher like my co-operating teacher was trying to do. It made me feel limited...
> (2, 21-6-91).

It was becoming clear to me that Yashmine had gone through the reflective programme without undergoing any meaningful transformation in her belief about what teacher education should do for student teachers. Even though she believed in critical reflection in teaching it was limited to an instrumental application of techniques that have been identified to work in the classroom. I saw a deficiency in such a narrow, technical view of critical reflection, for it denies the flux and vulnerability inherent in teaching and techniques come to be seen as a way of controlling teaching and dealing with the unexpected in the classroom.

But my view not withstanding, Yashmine's pre-occupation with teaching skills should not go unheeded in considering any teacher education programme focusing critical reflection in teaching as its goal because it highlights the fact that student teachers are unlikely to have higher level concerns involving reflective thinking until their competency concerns are resolved.

Theme two: Making teaching an ethical endeavour through critical reflection

In questioning the relationship between teaching as an ethical relationship between student and teacher and teaching as a mechanistic application of pre-determined techniques we arrived at what appeared to be another contradiction in the meaning of critical reflection for Yashmine. On this occasion, we were exploring the way in which the teaching of social studies could be made a moral ethical endeavour in the classroom as opposed to indoctrination of the student by the teacher. Yashmine acknowledged the unequal relationship between the teacher and the student in the pedagogical situation. In this relationship, the teacher is in a superior position because, as she said,

> Yash. .....He or she (the teacher) has "superior" knowledge and experience. The teacher is usually older and he or she has more power and authority in the classroom. He or she is in the position to decide what is worth teaching the student and the teacher's evaluation influences the future of the student. The student is, therefore, at the mercy of the teacher...and this puts the teacher in an ethical relationship with the student. The ethical question involves how the teacher exercises his or her duty as teacher in a situation such as this.
> (2, 21-6-1991).

We tried to relate this asymmetrical relationship between the teacher and the student to critical reflection in teaching in order to see how the teacher could handle his or her teaching responsibility. Yashmine thought that a re-examination of the whole relationship between student and teacher in the classroom should serve as a starting point.

> Yash. We all tend to take for granted the teacher's authority in the classroom, and that he or she knows everything. Such a view needs some questioning in the re-assessment of the student-teacher relationship. When I was going to school, many of my teachers professed to have all the answers and this is still true of many teachers today. I think we need to ask what type of relationship exists in a situation where one person (the teacher) is assumed to be so powerful.
>
> Y. Are we talking here about teachers changing their roles in the classroom?
>
> Yash. Yes...to stop being in total control and give the students a chance to have some say in their learning. Social studies should not be a means by which students are indoctrinated. When I was going to school my social studies teacher made even the most controversial topics appear like issues that already had given answers. Her own views always prevailed and the whole class hated that.

> Y. How would you prefer social studies to be taught?
>
> Yash. I think it should begin by asking oneself, "Why do I want to become a social studies teacher?" The answers to this question greatly influence the way one teaches social studies...
>
> ....I have never liked imposing my own views on people. I was brought up to believe in certain values and I do have my own personal views on issues but I do not think that these should be imposed on my students. For instance, we had a very interesting class discussion during the Iraq vs. the rest of the world war. I firmly believed that the U.S.A. was manipulating the world to see things her own way by presenting information about the war in a particular way. I presented my view as a topic of discussion in my grade 11 class. It was interesting to listen to some of the counter arguments which came from my students. That was my whole purpose, to prove that I did not have the last word and that their opinions mattered. (2, 21-6-91).

In other words, Yashmine saw the teaching of social studies as a dialogical encounter between the teacher and the students instead of the teacher presenting issues as accomplished facts that were closed to questioning and reconstruction. She believed that the way in which this type of relationship to teaching could be achieved was through critical examination of curriculum and traditional classroom relationships in which the curriculum is regarded as a given and teachers as the sole knowledge bearers.

> Yash. When we come to consider curriculum and teaching as a dialogue between teachers and those being taught, then we have re-affirmed teaching as pedagogy and a moral endeavour.
> (2, 21-6-91).

Yet what I found contradictory in Yashmine's view was that even though she thought that this was the way social studies should be taught, she did not seem to see how this possible approach to teaching could have been closed had she been presented with predetermined ways of teaching social studies in her teacher education programme. In order to find out more about her reasons for looking at critical reflection in teaching social studies in this "open" way and yet insisting on receiving expert advice on how it should be taught, I decided to do a more critical reading of this aspect of her conversation. I started by deconstructing my own reading of her text and realized that I was interpreting her conversation according to my own understanding of critical reflection in teaching instead of taking what she was saying as an opportunity to look more deeply into what was shaping the ideas she had about critical reflection. Once I started "entering her world" I was able to locate her thoughts about critical reflection as application of teaching skills and techniques within two possibilities: her own history as a student and the dynamics of what Freud once referred to as "depth psychology" in this history.

Much of Yashmine's classroom experience as a student involved teachers employing teaching skills and techniques to control and regulate their practice and so, even though she now wished to move away from such orientation to teaching, she was constantly finding herself replicating what had been presented to her from childhood as natural about teaching. The representation of teaching as instrumental application of techniques has pervaded the discourse, research and practice of teaching and teacher education for almost a century and this view of teaching is usually presented in terms of "true" consciousness, which lulls teachers into a false sense of security that precludes any critical sensitivity. When an understanding is presented in such ideological manner it becomes a "second nature" as it hardens into a form of social amnesia to the point of forgetting its own historical development. Freud labels the mental dynamics of this process as "depth Psychology" within which ideology functions as lived experience and the critical powers of individuals are dulled or remain dormant. For Yashmine the ideology of teaching as application of teaching techniques acquired during teacher education functions as lived experience and, unlike Mary who sees ideology not as false-consciousness, but as an opportunity to make sense in a world of contradictory realities and arrive at a new system of value and new social practices, Yashmine seems to see the dominant representation of teaching and teacher education as a given which cannot be reconstructed or modified.

No educator can argue against the crucial importance of techniques to the proficient performance of teaching but as Heidegger makes us aware,

> ...the essence of technology is not in itself the institution of an end-means rationality, but...a way of being in the world which reveals everything as standing in reserve for our potential use...(quoted in Carson, 1984, p.221).

This means that as we marshal techniques or technological means to achieve desired ends, we must remember as educators that:

> Ontologically there exists for each of us a tension related to securing and maintaining a practical and communicative way of being with others in a predominantly technological world (Carson, 1984,p.219).

This requires us to be continually engaged in critical reflection as we carry out our everyday duties as educators. As an interpretive engagement of teaching, critical reflection in this sense involves not a negation of teaching techniques but a critique of any application of technique which erodes practical reason and interpretive understanding from an essentially human and dialogical process such as teaching. How this might be secured and maintained in practice should become a focus of critical reflection for educators.

Yashmine's teacher education programme seemed to have ensured dialogue with students not by giving them prescriptions, but by providing alternative approaches to classroom teaching and allowing them to test and reflect on these approaches and their theoretical bases in order to evolve a teaching style of their own. Through this means Yashmine had been allowed a voice in her learning to teach, the same way she was now talking about creating spaces within her teaching for the voices of her students to be heard. Will she ever see the relationship between critical reflection and teaching techniques in this way?

Theme three: The constraints of evaluation on critically reflective practice for student teachers

Yashmine's experience with her co-operating teacher during her teaching practicum fashioned another contradictory way in which she experienced critical reflection as a student teacher. This time the problem centred around evaluation in critically reflective practice.

> Yash. .....I don't buy all that talk about questioning your co-operating teacher's practice. The guy is also your evaluator....A lot depends on who you have as co-operating teacher. Mr. X. (her co-operating teacher) was so controlling that I did not feel comfortable to ask him questions about anything he did....In the end, I decided to forget everything I believed in about a critical approach to learning how to teach, and concentrate on surviving the practicum...
> (3,16-8-91).

At the beginning of this conversation, Yashmine saw evaluation as an impediment to some key aspects of critical reflection in teaching such as questioning and attempting to move away from established ways of teaching and trying out new things. I piloted the conversation to focus on the way she had experienced evaluation as a student teacher and why she thought that evaluation constrained critically reflective practice.

> Yash. Well, think about it. I was supposed to be questioning Mr. X's practice, right.? Not necessarily to criticise it but to know why he was doing certain things in his teaching. But as my evaluator, I was also afraid that he might misinterpret my questions as a challenge to the way he was doing things and that he might mark me down for that in the end. I know I had that fear because Mr. X. was not open-minded at all. He did no encourage alternatives or initiatives from me...
> (3,16-8-91).

As Rick had pointed out during my third conversation with him, in order to be able to experiment with critically reflective practice in the practicum the student teacher has to have a support system in the person of a co-operating teacher, for instance, who does not view the student teacher's questions as a threat to himself or herself but as a means by which they come to know some of the rationales undergirding practice. Because

Yashmine's fear of getting a negative evaluation from Mr. X., whom she saw as a narrow-minded teacher, denied her the opportunity to ask him questions about what was baffling her in teaching, she came to question the place of evaluation in a teacher education oriented towards critically reflective practice.

Additionally, because Mr. X's evaluation of her lessons provided her with no opportunity to learn from the process, Yashmine missed the chance of recognizing evaluation as a positive, reflective process that helps student teachers in their development. Consequently her negative view of evaluation overshadowed any positive role that co-operating teachers play in supervising student teachers.

> Yash. ....I mean, they (the co-operating teachers) see themselves more as evaluators than mentors...
>
> Y. They are also there to guide you as you struggle to become a teacher. I know that they are also evaluators but that is not what they are first and foremost.
>
> Yash. I wish he had been more of a mentor. But I got no guidance from the evaluation that I received from him. It was always criticism. I was left with nothing to learn from...
> (2, 21-6-91).

It was evident from Yashmine's comments that if one of the goals of critical reflection in teacher education is to encourage student teachers to find out and discuss the rationales for particular classroom practices and the strengths and limitations of the choices that teachers make, then the place of evaluation in a teacher education programme aimed at encouraging critical reflection in teaching itself needs to be critically examined.

Shelly

Shelly is a social studies teacher in grades 11 and 12 at a high school in Edmonton. She was Rick's co-operating teacher while he was on his teaching practicum at her school and she has taught social studies for a total of seventeen years in various junior high and high school settings. For fifteen of these seventeen years, Shelly has served as co-operating teacher to student teachers in the various schools she has taught. She described her experience of supervising student teachers as "one of the rewarding experiences I have had as a teacher"(1, 28-9-91). Shelly taught for nine years before returning to the University of Alberta in 1982 to pursue a Master of Education degree and it was during this time that she met Ted Aoki who was both professor and chairman of the Department of Secondary Education. It was Aoki who had introduced her to the idea of reflective practice and critical reflection in teaching.

I met Shelly through my programme advisor who suggested that, as one of the social studies teachers that the university was collaborating with in the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354) programme, she might be interested in participating in my research. In April, 1991, I wrote her a letter through Rick introducing myself and asking her to be a participant in my study. She told Rick to tell me that she would have loved to do so but could not because of her tight time schedule. Upon Rick's prompting I decided to give her a call in school one afternoon. The telephone conversation lasted twenty minutes and by the end of it, Shelly had agreed to become a participant in my study. She did so largely because some of the alternative ways of viewing and approaching teaching that I had spoken about in our conversation reflected her own teaching philosophy and she thought it would be of mutual benefit to us to discuss these views in greater depth in research conversations.

Though we spoke in April, we were not able to meet until September because of her busy schedule. Between the months of April and June most of her time was taken up by her teaching duties, especially as the end of year examinations were imminent. Between July and August she and her family were away on holidays and, therefore, it was only after schools resumed in September that we were able to schedule our first research conversation in her school. Before this first meeting took place I took Shelly a copy of my research questions so that we could get acquainted and for her to get an idea about some of the topics that would guide and stimulate our discussions.

We had three research conversations between April and November and each took place in her classroom during her lunch break. She acknowledged that the duration of forty minutes for the lunch break was insufficient, especially because she spent parts of it answering telephone calls and attending to students who came to see her for various reasons. To make up for the time that we lost, she agreed to extend the conversations into her free period which was immediately after lunch on Wednesdays. The arrangement made me feel guilty about imposing on her time as well as conscious about the inappropriateness of our choice of meeting place, but as she had no other convenient place we had to make do with this choice. As a result of the extra time she gave we were able to make each conversation last for about forty-five minutes.

In our first conversation we focused on our conceptual understandings of reflective practice and critical reflection in teaching. From some of the authors she mentioned (e.g., Schon, Huebner and Denton) I realized that we had done similar readings and she explained that she had agreed to collaborate in the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme because of her commitment to teach in a less traditional way and to test some of the theories she had read regarding reflective practice. Much of this first conversation centred around the dichotomous way in which the theory presented critically reflective practice, either as techniques to be applied or as a counter approach to technique in teaching. During our second conversation we tried to examine this distinction from the perspective of critical reflection in teaching and Shelly found it hard, almost impossible, to divide critically reflective teaching into such binary oppositions. She commented:

> S. You really cannot draw a clear-cut line there. Critical reflection in practice is a combination of so many things--techniques, attitude, consideration about the kids one is teaching...and responsibility towards them, interest in the whole environment of teaching...it's a whole lot of considerations rolled up into one activity (teaching)...
> (1, 28-9-91).

She spoke about some of the ways in which she had been attempting to implement what she believed in as critically reflective teaching both in her classroom and in her relationship with the student teachers under her supervision.

> S. I try to use inquiry teaching methods whenever I can and I try to make my student teachers feel comfortable enough to try out new things in their classes... (1, 28-9-91).

But she quickly added that even though she believed in and was open to new ideas in teaching, bureaucratic and other structural constraints usually stood in her way to implementing this belief about teaching. Despite such constraints, however, she generally tried to remember that critical reflection is largely related to one's sense of responsibility towards the students whom one faces in the classroom.

> S. ....If you always remember that they (the students) come first in your teaching, then, somehow, you find a space within these constraints to teach in a responsible way...
> (1, 28-9-91).

I identified about thirty topics that emerged during our conversations. Many of these seemed to centre around critical reflection as it relates to responsibility in teaching and as a result of in-depth analyses, four themes emerged which spoke to the relationship between critical reflection and teaching for Shelly. These were:

1. Critical reflection in teaching as technique and critical reflection as a mode of being
2. Constraints on embracing alternative practices such as critically reflective practice
3. Inquiry as an orientation to critical reflection
4. Critical reflection as pedagogical responsibility

Theme one: Critical reflection in teaching as technique and critical reflection as a mode of being

Shelly's appreciation of the complexity of teaching and her belief that her students came first allowed her to see critical reflection in teaching more as a way of being than as a collection and application of teaching skills and techniques.

> S. ....Techniques are useful, I cannot dispute that, especially when the student teacher is just starting out. But it (teaching) has to do with much more than a collection of skills and I emphasize this in my supervision of student teachers. I help them become aware that skills have to be applied for a purpose. If you do not have the educational well-being of your students at heart the skills cannot be employed towards useful ends. If you care about your students you approach teaching with your whole being...you can't afford to be a mere technician... (1, 28-9-91).

This ontological analysis of teaching went on focus on two articles which we had both read: "That Mode of Being Called Teaching" by David Denton and "The Vocation of Teaching" by Dwayne Huebner. Both these authors make a distinction between teaching as mere performance of a job and teaching as a vocation and a mode of being in the world. Shelly called my attention especially to the way Denton describes teaching as "the teacher in her world with others". Denton writes:

> If we seek an understanding of a being who teaches from within the situation, the meaning (of teaching)...will be obtained from the teacher in her world with others, not from some a priori law, not even a probabilistic one (1988, p.102).

Huebner also argues that to have the vocation of a teacher is to be called by the “Other”, and to permit oneself to be present for children and young people. Such a vocation cannot be reduced to ends selected by outsiders which can be achieved "by anyone given the right tools and training, technically matched to the ends" (Huebner, in Bolin, 1984, p.18).

Unfortunately, as Shelly pointed out, those who develop curriculum do not view teaching as "being" for the teacher.

> S. ....They (the curriculum "experts") assume that our work can be done by anyone who possesses the skills. They present us with curriculum guides about what to teach, even telling us how to teach the materials. To a certain extent, they are stifling our professional judgments and making it impossible for us to "be" as teachers.
> (2, 26-10-91).

But despite this absence of consideration for the teacher's autonomy, Shelly tried to find a way to "be" with her students. By approaching teaching as "possibility" for her students she lives out a basic philosophy she believes in as teacher.

> S. Any curriculum can become alive and open possibilities for students to have a meaningful educational experience...it all depends on how the teacher relates to that curriculum. Teaching is a meaning making activity for both students and teacher. The possibility I create for my students to make this meaning is what is important for me.
>
> .....You take a particular topic and ask yourself: "How can I teach this topic in a meaningful way to my students?" Next, you weigh alternative approaches to teaching it and you consider the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Naturally, you choose the approach that is of most benefit to your students. That's how I relate to techniques in teaching. I am always reflecting in a critical manner upon each technique I employ, its repercussions and implications for meaningful teaching...
> (2, 26-10-91).

Shelly regarded the relationship between technique and what it means to be a teacher as complex, deserving consideration and critical reflection if teachers are to carry out their practice in a responsible way.

> S. ....It's how you, as teacher, handle a particular technique. Even knowledge transmission has its uses in certain circumstances. You are there to teach the students the material, but you are also there to make sure that the material acquired by them becomes meaningful to their life outside the classroom in a creative way. As teacher, your responsibility is to help them towards this creativity.
>
> Y. So what is really needed is critical reflection on a particular technique before a teacher employs it...
>
> S. In a way, yes, but there is also self-reflection as teacher in order to bring about change in practice. It's not simply reflecting on methods or teaching behaviours in the classroom. I guess it is a combination of two things. When you reflect upon yourself as teacher you are questioning your own practice and simultaneously thinking how you could improve that practice. I really do not think that one can reflect seriously upon technique if one does not first reflect upon self as teacher.

> (2, 26-10-91).

I agreed with Shelly's sentiment that self-reflection leads to self-understanding which in turn brings about a critical questioning of one's teaching practices. During our third conversation we returned to a deeper questioning of the dichotomy often created between teaching as technique and teaching as reflective practice. Shelly saw such distinctions as rooted in the different philosophies that people have about teaching.

> S. ....Some see teaching as a job to be "effectively" done by a skillful application of techniques. Others see it as a thoughtful and responsible way of being with children...
> (3, 12-11-91).

As one who saw teaching as a human act and as "being" Shelly expressed the hope that through critical reflection upon teaching such dichotomy will dissipate.

> S. Teaching is a human act, involving our actions on young people and the way in which they are affected by these actions. If you view teaching as a human act, then you are constantly thinking about how your methodology affects the young people that you teach...
> (3, 12-11-91).

Theme two: Constraints on embracing alternative practice

During our second conversation Shelly reflected on the way her Master's degree programme had helped change her outlook about teaching and sensitized her to seek alternative approaches to teaching social studies, different from the mainly knowledge transmission exercise that she had gone through as a student and which still pervaded the teaching of social studies in many schools. She thought that an effective way of seeking alternatives lay in critically reflective practice as she understood it.

> S. ....Teaching that embraces critical reflection as part of practice has many possibilities. For instance, in social studies critical reflection means constantly thinking about both content and methodology. I believe in making content problematic in my classroom so that the students can come to their own meaning instead of going away with mine. As Freire argues, teaching methods could lead to

> either liberation or domestication. If you present content in an unproblematic way, then, in a sense, you are indoctrinating or domesticating learners....If your methodology opens up possibilities for learners to view content in challenging ways, then you are making it possible for them to go on asking questions in order to make sense in the world...
> (2, 22-10-91).

But as we continued to discuss the theme of teaching as possibility for students, Shelly reflected on how the day to day pressures of teaching and the teaching milieu afforded little time and opportunity for her to reflect seriously upon the tasks she performed as teacher.

> S. ....It's gotten worse since my responsibility as senior teacher increased. I do not have time to reflect about pedagogical experiences with colleagues as I'd like to. You have seen how busy I am even during my breaks...and I have a family to look after. Next year, I am thinking of teaching only during the morning hours. That will give me time to engage in more activities related to my professional development.
> (2, 22-10-91).

During our third conversation Shelly expressed her concern about the business-like manner in which modern schools are run and the way in which such alienating conditions constrain the teacher's ability to reflect seriously on their pedagogical lives with students. This time we were discussing the grade 12 social studies curriculum which she described as bringing out the worst in her as a teacher.

> S. It is frustrating that I cannot teach my grade 12's according to my deepest beliefs about teaching. But I am not an island unto myself. I have to function within an administrative mind-set, a set curriculum and central office directives. All these structures set limitations on how I'd actually like to function as a teacher.
>
> ....With my grade 11's I can afford to employ teaching methods that are more inquiry-oriented and, therefore, more inclined toward critical reflection ...but with grade 12, the impending standardized examinations leave me little time to embrace inquiry in a meaningful way. I mean, this is their (the grade 12 students') life, their future on the line and I have this responsibility to see them through the curriculum material for the exam. So it's mainly knowledge transmission based on the textbook...and God knows I don't want to teach this way...
> (3, 12-11-91).

The pressures constraining Shelly from personally engaging critically reflective teaching approaches and acting authentically as a teacher were a major source of discontent for her. The absence of an opportunity for collegial discussions and doing current readings pertaining to her profession was alienating her, and structural constraints such as curriculum and examinations were suffocating her as teacher. She said:

> S. I cannot function authentically within such constraints. My behaviour contradicts my fundamental belief about what a teacher is. The pressure of work leaves me no time for meaningful reflection or educational discussions. The pressure of educational accountability forces me to function within a technical mind-set...and I know I want to be more than a technician to my students.
> (3, 12-11-91).

While Shelly felt that reducing her workload by teaching only in the morning could leave her time "to read, converse with colleagues and engage in critical reflection on myself as teacher" (3, 12-11-91) she remained skeptical about whether such an arrangement would necessarily change the way she taught her examination classes.

> S. The pressure of the examination is always going to be there and so it's always going to be mainly instrumental teaching for those kids in grade 12, as opposed to a more meaningful interaction with them.... My competence as a teacher will always be measured by my students' ability to reproduce the knowledge I have transmitted to them. I would have loved to guide them creatively in the construction of their own knowledge. It's kind of sad that I can't...
> (3, 12-11-91).

Shelly also pointed to another problem during our discussion about the way a heavy workload could constrain the engagement of critically reflective teaching activities. I enquired whether she and other teachers wishing to embrace critically reflective practice had ever asked the school administration to reduce their workload in order to provide them with opportunity to inquire into practice.

> S. Whoever heard of a teacher going to the principal and asking to be given time off to reflect?
>
> Y. It's not like you are going to say, "Can you give me time off to reflect?" Reflection does not occur in a vacuum. It involves concrete activities such as we have been discussing--reading, collegial conversations, doing research, reflecting

> over content and techniques, etc. I am talking about time off to do things related to critically reflective practice...
>
> S. ....I understand you...but it still does not explain who is going to take up part of my workload if I am given time off. Plus, you have to remember that the administration first has to value critical reflection in teaching before giving recognition to it. For me, reflection comes from within, lodged in a belief I now have about teaching...I do not want to force anyone to act in accordance with my own beliefs about teaching...
> (3, 12-11-91).

It was becoming clear to me that some constraint from the school administration was at issue here. Unless a critically reflective orientation to practice becomes valued and recognized by the administration, teachers wishing to engage such orientation will find it a difficult task to do so. However, Shelly seemed reluctant to go into any critical discussion about her school's administration, so this topic was not sufficiently pursued.

Although Shelly could not fully live out her beliefs about teaching, she tried to relate to her student teachers in a manner that reflected these beliefs.

> S. What I try to do is to relate to my student teachers according to what I believe about teaching. When they are here my teaching load is reduced so I have more time to work with them in the way that critically reflective practice desires. For example, when Rick was with me we spent an enormous amount of time discussing his teaching problems and questions. He was also given the freedom to do what he believed in as teacher....I did not want to impose anything on him or do anything to constrain him...but he did not make many mistakes. He was a natural (teacher).
> (3, 12-11-91).

To some degree this aspect of our conversation was depressing. It left both of us more convinced that unless some of the material and individual constraints on critically reflective practice are removed, the teacher will forever find it difficult, if not impossible, to act authentically.

Theme three: Inquiry as an orientation to critical reflection

Shelly's reformed outlook about teaching allowed her to see teaching not as an accumulation of specific and observable skills identified beforehand, but as a process of inquiry which allows her students to go on asking questions. For her, critical reflection in teaching could not be divorced from inquiry.

> S. When you are a critically reflective teacher you are inquiring into several things about teaching--skills, your relationship with your students, the content which you teach, the context in which you are teaching, a whole bunch of considerations that make you not to accept ideas without weighing their worth or worthlessness...
> (1, 28-9-91).

For Shelly critical reflection in teaching meant making social inquiry problematic for oneself and for one's students by employing teaching processes that counter traditional ways of teaching. She explained "traditional ways of teaching" as:

> S. ...one in which an authority relationship exists between teacher and student making it impossible for the student to make contributions to the learning process...one in which it is only the teacher who is assumed to know...
>
> ....A traditional environment values knowledge transmission as opposed to co-construction of knowledge by teacher and students. It does not encourage inquiry or seek alternatives.
> (1, 28-9-91).

Shelly explained that she had gone to school in a largely traditional environment and her earlier beliefs about teaching had been shaped by the experience. However, her higher education and increased appreciation of the changing circumstances in teaching now made her reject such an environment as a constraint on meaningful learning. She saw the hope of an authentic education for her students in an educational environment that is oriented towards inquiry.

> S. It (an inquiry environment) provides opportunities for students to be creative and to make independent decisions based on a critical assessment of a situation. When I teach social studies, I try to elicit and reward creativity and critical thinking...
>
> Y. How do you carry out inquiry in your classroom?
>
> S. Generally I maintain an openness to things. I allow newness to emerge all the time with both my student teachers and my regular students. It's like learning from them something you have given them the chance to discover...

> ...I use teaching methods like group work or collaborative assignments in order to throw the students together to co-inquire into problems and to be open to alternative solutions. I make each group responsible for the choices they make in trying to resolve a particular problem....I do this by helping them consider both the short-term and long-term consequences of their choices, and making them aware that inquiry goes beyond a simple question of coming up with a solution that works. (1, 28-9-91).

In my interpretive remarks about inquiry I expressed my discomfort about reducing the inquiry process to a technique to be mastered by teachers in the classroom.

> Y. When inquiry is thus reduced it ceases to be an orientation to practice and becomes a mere technique employed by teachers, without reflection, to solve classroom problems.
>
> S. ...But the inquiry process has to be grounded in certain skills and techniques. I have no problem with skills so long as they are employed with careful reflection... (2, 22-10-91).

I was finding it difficult to grasp the point that Shelly seemed to be making here. To my mind, she would not be talking about the component skills of inquiry if she were not conceiving of inquiry as a technique.

> Y. It seems to me as if you are talking about specific skills which can be learned and applied by teachers to achieve certain pre-defined goals. This is employing inquiry in a technical and instrumental way...
>
> S. But this is the model of inquiry that is presented in the 1981 Alberta social studies curriculum. It is assumed that teachers should master the steps involved...and the students are given questions to explore that already have pre-defined answers. I have sometimes wondered about whether it is any different than the applied science approach which it is supposed to counter...
>
> ....You cannot force people to be inquiry orientated by presenting them with specific procedures to follow. Inquiry is an attitude of mind that arises out of reflection...
>
> ....But I do strongly believe that teachers have to be sensitized to the inquiry process, and although the component skills are not a sufficient condition to become oriented to inquiry they are necessary because I cannot see how teachers can move the students through the inquiry process without first becoming proficient in the skills that enable them to do so...
> (2, 22-10-91).

The contradiction between inquiry as an orientation and inquiry as technique did not seem to be getting resolved in this conversation. This was mainly because we were both arguing around the Alberta social studies curriculum which presents inquiry as a specification of certain procedures to be mastered and applied. Presented this way, inquiry stands as a cornerstone of certainty in a subject like social studies which is supposed to portray the uncertainty that is inherent in human situations.

During our third conversation, the discussion about sensitizing teachers to inquiry skills led us into a few of the problems related to inquiry teaching beyond the problem of technical reductionism. What emerged foremost in Shelly's mind was the problem of evaluation in inquiry teaching.

> S. ....The problem of evaluation remains unresolved even in the Alberta social studies curriculum. It is not adequately addressed. How do you evaluate inquiry without resorting to utilitarian criteria that are incompatible with inquiry as a process?
> (3, 12-11-91).

Our discussion about evaluation probed particularly the tensions that inhere in assessing an inquiry-based course like social studies in a norm-referenced manner. As with critically reflective practice itself, the inquiry process presents evaluators with a problem that requires a different conception of content, teaching and learning methods and assessment.

I went on to raise another problem, one that I had encountered when I employed inquiry teaching in Sierra Leone. It was a problem which I thought constrained inquiry teaching in any setting with a history of a traditional orientation to teaching.

> Y. ....I experienced many constraints ranging from classrooms which were too small to accommodate group work, to the tensions between indigenous African education (to be discussed in the next chapter) and inquiry as an educational process. But what I found most difficult was how hard my students found it to accept the open-endedness of critical inquiry. The popular concept of inquiry is the asking of questions in a search for answers and this was how my students approached inquiry....I believe that the end of inquiry should be a commitment to inquiry and not definite solutions.

> S. This is not different from the way inquiry is viewed in Canadian classrooms. Students are used to teachers providing solutions to every classroom problem, either through techniques or some other expertise. The students expect these answers and teachers do not refuse to give them because we believe that we have the best method to impart...
>
> Y. I think that, as teachers, we need to stand back and let students realize that we do not have all the answers and that we do not have to be in control for learning to occur. We have to let them work out their own approaches to learning and if we present the learning process to them as inquiry, we will be helping them along the road to independent learning...
> (3, 12-11-91).

Theme four: Critical reflection as pedagogical responsibility

Shelly firmly believed that to be critically reflective was to be pedagogically concerned about the students whom one taught. This theme emerged during our conversation about the tensions between curricular expectations and pedagogical decision-making by the teacher. Curriculum guides make technical assumptions about the classroom and are based on generalized theories about teaching and learning that fail to account for the individuality of real children in practical situations. In implementing such curricula teachers have the responsibility of making complex decisions about living and working with others in a world that is predominantly conceived as technical. In this contradiction between technique and practice, Shelly saw her responsibility as that of being continually reflective in a critical way as she carried out her every day task of teaching.

> S. Rationalizing the educational system or standardizing the curriculum is not going to get rid of differences in individual children. Each child is unique...and they come to school with diverse backgrounds which influence how they relate to the curriculum and to others in school...
>
> Y. We must learn as teachers to live with all these differences...
>
> S. Precisely, and I kind of like the variety--it makes the classroom more interesting....I had a Vietnamese girl in my class a few years ago when I was teaching grade 10. She was simply uncomfortable doing any group work, probably because her English was not so good at the time, I don't know. It could have been something else. We were doing a class project on "our relationship with each other in the community". Each group was to write and produce a role-play about an encounter with a neighbour. She did not want to work in a group, so I let her work alone, and, with just a little guidance from me, she produced a short

> dialogue about her experience with meeting another girl next door soon after her arrival in Canada. Her story and dramatization about the sign language that was involved in the encounter turned out to be the funniest piece in the class.
> (2, 22-10-91).

By recognizing the individuality of the Vietnamese student and allowing her to "be" rather than forcing her into a group work that could have proved counter-productive, Shelly was able to make a compromise between the curriculum and a pedagogical requirement. To be a critically reflective teacher is to be able to listen to the voices of young people in need of direction in their educational becoming. Often these voices are suppressed by bureaucrats such as curriculum "experts" who assume that a technical response is sufficient to deal with all teaching problems. Pedagogical responsibility lies in the ability of the teacher to hear these voices and give them recognition in the teaching-learning process. Shelly created spaces within her teaching for these voices to be heard.

> S. Teaching has to be a mutual process in which I learn from my students as much as they learn from me. The world is continuously changing, every day, and the kids catch up faster with these changes than adults do. I try to be "in" by listening to them....I am transformed by what I hear from them the same way I hope they are transformed by what I teach them.
> (2, 22-10-91).

Huebner (1984) notes that to be a teacher is to reshape one's values as one is continuously reshaped by the newness of the world. That Shelly allowed herself to experience this "newness" and reconstruct her teaching values in terms of it was an indication of being pedagogically aware and responsible. However, she was careful not to embrace every change or "newness" in a bandwagon sort of way without subjecting such change first to critical reflection.

> S. I don't welcome change for the sake of change. I first examine the change carefully. What is required by children in school today is not what was required when we were going to school. The methods that worked for us no longer work today. This is an indication that the world is changing....I do not want to be locked up in the past.
> (2, 22-10-91).

In our conversation subsequent to this, Shelly had revealed that she had sometimes felt torn between pedagogical concerns and accountability.

> S. ....I am still thinking of grade 12 and the way I teach them. Social studies 30 is very teacher directed and also very intensive. I become frustrated in that class, torn between my pedagogical responsibility and provincial demands of being accountable.
>
> .....Teaching that class (grade 12) is like being in a bind. If I transmit knowledge without any inquiry activities I could have enough time to cover all the material for the exams and, in a way, this is also pedagogical responsibility. But then, what have the students learned? Yet if I go into inquiry activities there will be no time to cover the material and if the students fail because of this I am accountable in two ways: to the education board which thinks that I have not done a good job, and to the students who might not be able to continue their education without that diploma. (3, 12-11-91).

Shelly was aware that the examination was no measure of anything important or meaningful to her teaching but she could not afford to ignore it because it influenced the future of her students and the views that others had of her as a teacher. She was especially frustrated that the test reinforced the authority of outside "experts" to judge what knowledge was considered worthy in social studies. She saw this as "nothing less than another bureaucratic means of controlling teachers' behaviour." (3, 12-11-91).

Shelly translated her belief about critical reflection as pedagogical responsibility to her student teachers. Explaining the key qualities she looked for when evaluating student teachers, a sense of responsibility occupied a priority position.

> S. When I evaluate their (student teachers') teaching I look overall at their sense of responsibility towards their students, their teaching behaviours and the way they investigate their own actions in the light of educational contexts. In other words, I let them take an essentially moral stance towards their teaching acts...
>
> Y. This requires a conception of teaching in which attention is paid to so many things, such as the political, social and economic context of teaching, etc. Isn't this a bit too much to expect of student teachers?
>
> S. I don't think so. It means that I am making them sensitive to the fact that teaching occurs in a context which they cannot afford to ignore because of their relatedness to teaching acts. If you are not attentive to context, how do you examine your practice in its light?
> (3, 12-11-91).

Much of teaching has to do with intentionality. Young people are intentionally sent to school and are required to go through educational experiences that have been intentionally identified as worthwhile goals to pursue. This makes teaching an intentional act, carrying an ethical responsibility and, for Shelly, critical reflection began with a scrutinization of our choices and the conditions that shape our pedagogical experiences with young people.

Cliff

Cliff has been a social studies teacher in Alberta for twenty-seven years. After graduating in 1962 with a history degree from the University of Alberta he taught English at a high school in Medicine Hat for four years and social studies at another high school in Edmonton for five years. He then returned to the University of Alberta for graduate studies and, following a Master's degree in education, he went to Germany for three years to teach social studies in a military academy. Cliff reflected back on his stay in Germany as a rich experience:

> C. I learned many things from their culture which changed my own attitude about certain things. I also learned how to teach students effectively without resources such as textbooks which we here take for granted. I did this by simply sharing my own experiences. For instance, I taught a whole unit on human rights by merely building on a collection of glossary of terminologies...terms like "democracy", "freedom", "civil rights", "control", etc. It was a great experience...
> (1, 30-4-91).

Coming from a background characteristically short of teaching resources, I displayed tremendous interest in Cliff's "teaching without textbooks" approach. As we discussed the approach, he explained that he had taught the terms by explicating their meanings based on his own attitudes and beliefs towards the concepts, and this was followed by a general class discussion. From the discussion he was able to learn the attitudes and beliefs of his students towards the concepts. He explained:

> C. ....The experience was based on dialogue during which each side gained knowledge without necessarily attempting an imposition of views. I was able to subject some of my own beliefs about these concepts to some examination, re-thought them and I realized that we in this part of the world are not always right... (130-4-91).

Cliff returned from Germany in 1972 and joined the staff at the high school in Edmonton where he is presently teaching social studies in grades 10 and 11. He was Mary's co-operating teacher when she was doing her teaching practicum in that school. Before Mary, Cliff had supervised student teachers for a total of seventeen years and, as he told me, he loved the experience because,

> C. ....They (the student teachers) are the main link between the school and the university for me. We do not get information from the university regarding what is current in teacher education. When the student teachers are here I get to know what's going on at the university. Most of the time what they do in teaching ties in with what they are doing in C & I classes....I also love being a role model for them in teaching,...and I love to watch them grow...only, their time here is usually too short.
> (1,30-4-91).

I chose Cliff on the random chance that, as one of the teachers collaborating in the reflective programme, he might be interested in participating in a study like mine. I wrote him a letter during the second week in March introducing myself and stating my research interest and I enclosed a copy of my research questions. He surprised me by calling me almost immediately and after conversing briefly about my research topic during which I explained that, as collaborator in the programme, his contribution would be valuable to me he agreed to become a participant. Our first meeting took place on the 30th of April and, even though the conversation was meant to be exploratory, I took along my tape-recorder because I felt that some thing might come up in our conversation that might be of importance to me. We met at 3.30 p.m. in his office at the school and we chatted for forty minutes. This first conversation explored mainly our cross-cultural experiences and our experiences as teachers and teacher educators. Cliff was also interested in knowing the extent to which my research would be useful to my teaching when I returned to Sierra

Leone. As I went over the teaching background in Sierra Leone and my own experiences which had prompted this study, he was excited at the possibility of an alternative approach to teacher preparation and teaching involving critical reflection on practice. He explained that the teaching tradition in my country which I had described was very similar to that in Canada and that even though that was the tradition in which he had trained and was working as teacher, he was "nevertheless open to new ideas in teaching" (1, 30-4-91). However, our conversation subsequent to this one left me questioning the extent of Cliff's openness to new ideas in teaching.

A major theme that emerged during this conversation arose from the emphasis which Cliff put on teaching experience during our discussion. He believed very firmly in what Zeichner (1983) refers to as the "traditional craft" approach to teaching in which experienced teachers pass on to student teachers the "effective" teaching behaviours and crafts that they have acquired over the years. This came out when I asked him during our conversation to talk a bit more about what he meant when he had said that he loved being a role model to the student teachers he supervised.

> C. I believe totally that teaching is a craft which prospective teachers have to learn. Good teaching can only come from experience...and I do what I can to pass on to my student teachers the experiences I have learned over the years. I have taught for thirty years, that's many years of experience.
> (1, 30-4-91).

In my summary of this conversation I noted to Cliff the shortcomings of adopting the craft approach without first subjecting the crafts (teaching experiences) to critical examination. From my own experience as a student teacher I knew that not every craft was worthy of emulation. I suggested that in our next conversation we should explore the craft approach in relation to critical reflection.

Because of my own busy schedule which consisted of attending classes and working with the student teachers in my research, Cliff and I could not meet again till September. I wanted us to meet in June but he too was busy at that time with examinations and soon after, he went away for the summer. However, I gave him a summary of our first conversation and he later remarked that my comments about subjecting craft to critical examination was "quite provocative".

When we met again in September Cliff was ready to defend his belief in the value of teaching experience or craft because the approach had worked for a number of student teachers he had supervised.

> C. ....A young man I had worked with did so well on his practicum that this school decided to employ him. He was with us for three years and I still continued to be his mentor during that period. I taught him things like questioning skills, classroom management techniques...and many other things that have worked for me in the past..
> (2, 28-9-91).

Our discussion about valorization of the craft approach extended into the teaching of "values" in social studies. Cliff revealed that he had been quite comfortable with the 1971 Alberta social studies curriculum because, with no explicit explanation about how the topic of values was to be approached by teachers, he had had a leeway to teach his students what he believed in as valuable in Canadian culture and in life. When the 1981 social studies curriculum replaced that of 1971, a rationalized approach to the teaching of values had been presented to teachers to be learned and implemented. Cliff referred to the approach as "too scientific" and added that, even though he followed the curriculum's inquiry strategies to a large extent, he managed to make his students aware of "certain important values in our culture" (2, 28-9-91).

Our third conversation seemed to be marked by several contradictions in Cliff's statements regarding some of his beliefs about teaching expressed earlier. One instance of such contradiction emerged when we were talking about the need for the university to work together with schools to improve practice. Cliff repeated his earlier statement about being open to new ideas and said that the university should disseminate research findings about teaching in schools in order to keep teachers informed about current directions in teaching and teacher education. I saw a contradiction in Cliff here because I felt that if he was open to new ideas in teaching he would not be expressing such a firm belief in the apprenticeship or craft approach to teacher preparation. The university's reflective programme in which he was collaborating was being quite critical about the craft approach which he was espousing. Was he collaborating in the programme without allowing his views about educating teachers to be influenced by it?

In all we had three conversations between April and November from which emerged thirty nine topics. Following more rigorous interpretations and analyses, five themes emerged which seemed to reflect all the topics we had touched on and which appeared important to the way in which Cliff understood the relationship between critical reflection and teaching. These were:

1. Traditional craft in teaching and critical reflection
2. Values and critically reflective practice in social studies teaching
3. Need for coordination between schools and the university
4. The relationship between rewards and critical reflection in teaching
5. Critical reflection as "process-oriented", not "product-oriented" teaching

Theme one: Traditional craft in teaching and critical reflection

Cliff strongly believed that teaching is best learned by student teachers when they are in an apprenticeship situation with their co-operating teachers. He felt that experience played a very substantial role in becoming a teacher and that such experience had to come from veteran teachers who have accumulated a lot of wisdom and experience during their teaching years.

> C. I regard teaching as very complex, with many dimensions. On their own student teachers will take a very long time to learn everything about teaching. They need guidance from those who have been in the field longer. From their experience these professionals know what works...
> (1, 30-4-91).

Cliff recognized the complexities of teaching and he did not believe that student teachers are in a position to deal with such complexities on their own merely through inquiry or critical reflection on practice. By presenting himself as a role model whose teaching behaviours the student teachers could emulate he hoped they would more effortlessly come to know "what works" in the world of practice. I attempted to explain to him that the idea of critical reflection in teaching was to rethink the "what works" approach to teaching.

> Y. What we are discussing as "what works" is like the "applied science" approach in which techniques and skills which have been identified as working are applied to classroom problems. How do you know that what has worked for you will necessarily work for your student teachers?
>
> C. There are no guarantees, and I am not saying that there are. But what do you say to a student teacher who has no practical knowledge about teaching and who asks for your advice and help on, say, a disciplinary problem...or the best approach to teaching a particular topic? You certainly won't say to him or her, "Gee, you are on your own. Work it out yourself...".
>
> ....I do not regard teaching as a matter of trial and error. Teaching involves human beings and sometimes, mistakes could be costly for both the students and the student teachers.
> 1, 30-4-91).

Commenting on this aspect of our conversation during my interpretive analysis, I reminded Cliff that valorization of experience was deeply rooted in the structure of teacher education and that the experiential approach has been accepted as a commonsensical approach to student teaching without real critical reflection on the approach by teacher educators. I also expressed that, in my view, such an approach stunted growth and initiative in student teachers. I had written:

> Y. I know that we all tend to believe and take it for granted that the best way of learning something is by experience and that the authentic moment of teaching for student teachers is the ground of practice, the school, where they put to experience the theories they have learned. I am all for experience myself but not a blind emulation of someone else's experience without first examining it. I think student teachers should be given the chance to test what they are presented with as "what works" and then make their own decisions in the light of such examination... This gives them the opportunity to be more than what has already been established.
> (interpretive comment, May 28, 1991)

Addressing the issue in our next conversation Cliff had this to say:

> C. I do allow them (the student teachers) to be themselves but, by the same token, I am there if they need my guidance. I share my experience with them but I don't say, "Here, you must do it this way." I try to help without imposing anything on them. I don't give them high marks because they have imitated my teaching style. I assess them on their ability to make the kids learn something, and whether the process (teaching) is an enjoyable experience for both sides...
> (2, 28-9-91).

At this time, Cliff was becoming defensive and we seemed to be going round in circles without agreeing much on how we could relate the traditional craft approach to critical reflection in teaching. I attempted to carry the conversation forward by asking him whether there was any way in which he thought the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme could be improved. Once more Cliff's apprenticeship approach surfaced.

> C. I think the practicum, as presently carried out, is insufficient for student teaching. I have always advocated a longer and compulsory internship for those learning to teach...
>
> Y. How long?
>
> C. I think it should last for a year with something like a half salary. .....Anything less is not enough and more will be hard to accept without full pay and all the other benefits...
>
> Y. How will a longer internship help?
>
> C. The eight week practicum is a short and artificial time during which student teachers are expected to do things on which they are evaluated. This situation puts certain constraints on what they are trying to do...
>
> .....I also think that student teaching is a learning process for the student teachers and it's got to be an experiential process. It entails learning such things as useful ways of implementing curriculum, useful techniques and resources in classroom management, etc. These are things a student teacher ought to experience over a long period of time under somebody's guidance in an apprenticeship system...
>
> ....The two student teachers I have worked with this year received a tremendous amount of valuable experience from me, but I think a longer period of apprenticeship would have added to that experience. A longer internship provides support for the neophyte teachers who are left on their own once they graduate from the teacher training programme. When you are apprenticed to a colleague, he or she is there to assist you in your development as teacher and not to evaluate you for a job.

> (2, 28-9-91).

It seemed to me that Cliff was objectifying experience and offering it as a map to be followed by neophyte teachers. Missing from his approach to assisting student teachers in their development is the view of teaching as "to let learn" (Heidegger, 1969). By offering his "valuable experiences" as an accomplished map to follow pedagogy is stifled as the neophyte teacher is denied the process of critical inquiry which allows him or her to analyze and interpret teaching behaviours. As I see it, the difference between functioning as an apprentice in a traditional craft and functioning as a critically reflective practitioner is inquiry. An apprenticeship approach, in Dewey's definition, is mis-educative because it reduces possibilities for further education and growth. A longer internship in an apprenticeship system that values normative notions of experience could not, in my opinion, be of much value to critically reflective practice.

Theme two: Values and reflective practice in social studies teaching

Our discussion on placing too much value on teaching experiences that have been proved as working extended into the problem of teaching moral values in the social studies classroom. Cliff suddenly introduced the topic when we were talking about leaving student teachers to frame their own experiences in teaching rather than imitating their co-operating teachers' experiences.

> C. What you are suggesting reminds me of the scientific approach to teaching values in the 1981 Alberta social studies curriculum. We are not supposed to teach the students any values per se, but rather, to teach them the process by which they can determine their own values. ....The curriculum's outlined method of doing this is what bothers me. It's like as long as the student's position is presented rationally and supported by strong arguments, the ethical conclusion that he or she comes to is valid....I don't agree with that...because the conclusion may itself be unethical or immoral...
> (2, 28-9-91).

Cliff told me that the 1971 Alberta social studies curriculum had been criticized as an "ethical relativism" because it had lacked any clear approach to the teaching of moral values. He, however, had felt comfortable with that curriculum because its very lack of prescriptions had allowed him to teach his students what he considered as important values to be learned.

> C. ....I do believe strongly that the students' points of view and beliefs are important, but, by the same token, I must admit that there are certain values of our society that I hold as important and have to be taught to them. For instance, discriminating against other races or cultures simply because they are different than ours I consider as wrong and students should be taught this. They should be taught to understand and appreciate other cultures...
> (2,28-9-91).

Cliff explained that he had been robbed of the opportunity to teach what he believed in as valuable about Canadian culture and life when the 1971 curriculum had been replaced by the 1981 curriculum which came with a rational, scientific approach to teaching values. Referred to as "the rational approach to teaching ethical issues", Cliff regards it as irresponsible because:

> C. It means that anything that the child believes in is acceptable as long as he or she has reasons to support it. I do agree that we should not impose our own beliefs but, by the same token, we have the responsibility, as teachers, of not leaving them to believe that anything goes as long as they have logical arguments to support it...
> (2, 28-9-91).

Cliff believed that to be a teacher is to be in an ethical situation. If to educate means "to lead out" then the teacher has a responsibility that extends beyond merely teaching kids the process through which they could determine their own values. In their trusted position of being in "loco parentis" teachers act as parents teaching kids the difference between right and wrong without imposing their own beliefs and ethics. Cliff was keenly aware of this responsibility but he was sometimes afraid of carrying it through because it is considered as educationally unacceptable. Nevertheless, within the limits of what he was allowed to do, he endeavoured to relate to his students in a manner he considered as "ethically responsible".

> C. For example, I make them aware of my own values and views on certain issues, but I also listen to their own views and arguments; in other words I let different perspectives emerge in the class. But though I give them grades according to the conviction of their arguments, I always manage to make them accountable for what they say.
>
> Y. What do you mean?
>
> C. For instance during the Gulf war we wrote an essay on a peaceful resolution of international conflicts as opposed to war. One student wrote a brilliant paper on the economic benefits of war, such as access to oil, profits for firearms manufacturers, jobs, etc. It was very well-written. I gave him an excellent grade but before giving him back the paper, I made him listen to another student's essay in which the human implications of war had been focused. As well, I threw in my own reasons for not believing in war...but I did not say to him, "Here, you must believe in what I believe in about war". But his earlier views underwent some modification after he had listened to our own side of the argument.
> (2, 28-9-91).

Cliff's discomfort with the 1981 curriculum lay mainly with its technical approach to the process of teaching values. Those who had developed that curriculum had attempted to remove the subjective sphere from a potentially explosive topic like values teaching by addressing the process in an objective way requiring the pre-specification of principles which teachers should master and implement in the classroom. Cliff did not see how students could learn ethics from such a process.

> C. We are being asked to teach them the steps involved in the procedure and leave them to apply the steps to ethical situations in which they find themselves. It doesn't work that way...
> (3, 14-11-91).

The technical approach of the 1981 curriculum may have failed to address the question of application in values teaching but neither is the matter resolved by Cliff's advocacy for a return to values teaching. Although I hail from a culture where elders carry the onus to teach children right from wrong, my own personal experiences have taught me that elders are not always right. An uncritical acceptance of certain values may lead us into conflicts that are difficult to resolve because we have not identified the roots of the biases inherent in them and determined the limits to which we are willing to go in defence of a particular position. I expressed this sentiment to Cliff.

> Y. I think what I see here is not a dogmatic application of anyone's beliefs or values....I think what is required is a sensitivity and self-reflection on the part of the students when they find themselves in a situation requiring them to act in an ethical manner. As teachers we should guide them towards this sensitivity and reflection...
>
> C. ....I do agree about the point concerning critical reflection in the teaching of values.... Critical reflection involves asking questions like why you believe in a certain value or in a certain way of thinking and acting. My students keep me on my toes with their inevitable "why" questions. For instance, "Mr. E., why do you believe that so and so should be the case.?" ....And I always defend my views and listen to theirs. In the end critical reflection is what we engage in to arrive at our decisions about what we believe in as a value.
> (3, 14-11-91).

Theme three: Need for co-ordination between schools and the university

A recurring theme in my conversation with Cliff was the strong need for the University of Alberta to work in co-operation and collaboration with schools in order to make critically reflective practice successful. Cliff saw the university as the place where research about teaching is done and schools as the ground of practice where research theories are applied. For this reason he thought schools and the university should work together to improve teaching. However, in his experience such collaboration has not been existing sufficiently, with the result that teachers are usually ignorant about current directions in which teacher education is going. In such a situation, co-operating teachers, especially, find it difficult to do their job effectively as supervisors because they might have expectations totally different from what the university is promoting in teacher education. In addition, in-service teachers do not benefit from research aimed at improving practice. Cliff believed that, if the goals of critically reflective practice are to be achieved, more communication is required between the ground of research and the ground of practice.

> C. ....Usually we (teachers) have no idea what's going on in teacher education at the university. I learn about what's going on when the student teachers are here on their practicum....Usually what they are doing in the classroom ties in with what they are being taught in C & I classes at the university.
> (1, 30-4-91).

Commenting on this topic in my interpretive remarks, I raised two issues. First was to agree with Cliff about the importance of research findings being disseminated in schools but I also raised questions about a total belief and reliance by teachers upon external research findings to guide and direct their practice. I mentioned the advantages of teacher research, such as enabling teachers to explore and develop pedagogical theories in their own practices and the power and control which teacher research brings. I particularly mentioned action research as a means by which teachers could address their practical problems through critical reflection and action. Second, I noted the difficulty of getting teachers to participate in what goes on at the university in teacher education because of their perceived lack of time for such involvement.

Cliff addressed both issues during our second conversation. Like me, he too believed in the value of teacher research and told me that he had attended a seminar in Calgary in 1989 whose theme was teacher-as-researcher. But though not unfamiliar with the idea, he had not been able to conduct any research of his own in his school. I asked him the reason for this.

> C. Lack of time, plain and simple. I am too busy with teaching and other administrative duties to take on any meaningful research project.
>
> Y. Have you tried requesting a rescheduling of your time and workload from, say, your principal, to enable you to do so? I regard time off to do research not as a holiday but as time spent doing something to improve practice...
>
> C. Not with all the cuts in educational funding. Time off would mean recruiting some one to teach my classes while I am away and the school might not have funding for that...
> (2, 28-9-91).

It seemed to me that the problem of time was being viewed by Cliff as a research versus teaching dilemma, which always seems to get resolved in favour of the latter. Many teachers (and perhaps school administration as well) consider school-based research as an optional extra, to be engaged in when other commitments allow.

Although time appeared to be a major constraint on teacher research for Cliff, the problem seemed to be more deeply rooted in the narrow view which he seemed to have of the teacher's role. For instance, addressing the issue of practitioner involvement in teacher preparation at the university he said,

> C. ....Again, teachers are too busy to attend university seminars on teacher preparation. When I said teachers should be involved I did not mean having them around after school or on a Saturday to sit in on university seminars. The university academics are given the time and the money to do the research anyway. What I meant has more to do with the dissemination of information among teachers. It could be handouts written in plain simple language, not academic jargons that teachers cannot understand, informing us about what the university is emphasizing in teacher education at a particular time. I am sure that if such information is given in a few pages of simple presentation, and not a fifty-page document in jargon that obscures rather than elucidating, teachers will welcome it.
> (2, 28-9-91).

While I agreed with Cliff that highly jargonistic modes of discourses further alienated theory from practice, his emphasis on research being done by university academics left me questioning the extent to which he really believed in the value of insider research as an orientation to critically reflective practice by teachers. It appeared to me that he saw the teacher more as a technician struggling to apply solutions arrived at elsewhere to teaching problems than a researcher who can improve or theorize his or her own practice through reflective inquiry.

It should be noted, however, that his argument that communication was needed between the university and schools if the idea of critical reflection in practice is to succeed carries strong validity. A major concern I had had about the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme which was focusing critical reflection as an aim in teacher education was that only a certain number of teachers were participating in it as co-operating teachers and that they were being paid to do so. I had pondered over this approach to critically reflective practice and wondered about its effectiveness. By limiting participation to only a certain number of teachers the vast majority of teachers will remain unaware of the critically reflective approach to teaching. By paying them monetary rewards and incentives to participate in the programme, will these teachers genuinely engage critical reflection in teaching? This question became the focus of the next topical run between Cliff and myself.

Theme four: The relationship between rewards and critically reflective practice

Although Cliff assured me that, for him, critical reflection on what he did as teacher came mainly from within rather than from external motivations he acknowledged that rewards do create opportunities to become involved with critically reflective practice. He admitted receiving monetary incentives as co-operating teacher, but added that even without such incentive, he would still participate in the programme.

> C. It's become part of the structure of teacher education in Alberta to pay co-operating teachers, and while some other co-operating teachers may be motivated by this to offer their services, I'd still agree to be a co-operating teacher without being paid. My motivation comes from a deep desire within me to help student teachers in their learning to teach.(3, 14-11-91).

While Cliff denied any correlation between the monetary incentives he received and reflective practice he agreed that rewards in other forms did help to give support to the goals of critically reflective practice.

> C. ....Monetary rewards do not foster a reflective disposition towards teaching. You could accept the money and do what is expected of you ...but this would be different than when reflection comes from within you because you genuinely believe that it is useful in your job as teacher.
>
> .....I am thinking about other forms of reward such as time off and a reduced teaching load to enable the teacher to be engaged in activities connected with critical reflection in practice. Of-course this means that recognition be first given to the importance of linking critical reflection with teaching by the school administration... (3, 14-11-91).

The recognition that Cliff was talking about is usually present in the discourse of, but curiously missing from the practice of, critically reflective teaching. We attempted to reflect on the reasons why "recognition", though alive in the theory of reflective practice, is usually absent in the practical situations.

> Y. Does the fault lie with the administration? During this research I have found out that many teachers are prepared to adopt a critically reflective approach to teaching but are constrained by their workload...
>
> C. That's right, which takes us back to the crucial importance of time and money. Perhaps if there were more funding more teachers would be let off to engage in reflective activities because then the school could afford to hire, say, substitute teachers..
>
> Y. Will this be for co-operating teachers only?
>
> C. Not necessarily. The opportunity could be extended to all teachers in order to make critical reflection in teaching a part of general practice. The programme organizers should step in here and arrange workshops for teachers where this approach to teaching is emphasized.
> (3, 14-11-91).

Our reflections reinforced my belief that unless something is done by the administration in schools to support and encourage teachers to embrace the kinds of practice advocated by teacher education programmes aiming at promoting critical reflection, the goals of such programmes will not be effectively realized.

Theme five: Critical reflection as "process-oriented", not "product-oriented" teaching

For Cliff, the value of critical reflection in teaching lies in its ability to make him view teaching as a "process and not as a "product". Thinking immediately of the process-product approach which has dominated the research and practice of teacher education since 1970, I asked him to make a distinction between these two terms as he was using them.

> C. Teaching as "product" emphasizes the kind of technical orientation that we have been talking about. Its emphasis is on the end-product of teaching...results,

> outcomes. The student is important only to the extent that he or she is able to do things that have been pre-specified...
>
> ....Teaching as "process", on the other hand, is oriented towards the student. Teaching skills are employed only on their basis of being able to make students more human and more empowered to assume control of their own success...
> (2, 28-9-91).

Cliff explained that the teacher training programme he had gone through had emphasized the end-products of teaching rather than teaching as an enhancing and enabling process that helps students to become more than what they are. This background and the pressures of educational accountability led him to lean towards the product approach for almost twenty years. Because I come from a society where examinations play a major role in determining the future of most Sierra Leoneans, I explained to Cliff that product-oriented teaching and learning received an inordinate amount of attention in schools in my country. The state assumes responsibility for determining what material is to be mastered for the national examinations and the teacher's responsibility is limited to passing this material to the students. In such a situation it becomes difficult for a teacher to engage real pedagogy.

Cliff indicated that he was now moving towards a new direction in his approach to teaching in order to be more pedagogically responsible.

> C. ....With more experience and new ideas in teaching, I have realized that this (product-oriented teaching) is not useful teaching. Now I think of teaching more as a process that should lead to something more for my students...

Considering that the demands of accountability for educational outcomes are still as prevalent today as they were twenty years ago, I asked Cliff how he was able to address this demand in his "process" approach.

> C. I still keep a keen eye on the exams, but within this the process approach allows me to value the contributions of all my students...and I try to make every member of the class responsible for the learning experience. I try to relinquish control to let this happen...
> (2, 28-9-91).

For some one who believed in passing on his experience and knowledge to his student teachers Cliff's response took me by surprise. If he now saw teaching more as a process that let learning happen, how could he reconcile this view with his earlier espousal of teaching as a traditional craft? Did he have one way of approaching teaching for his high school students and another for his student teachers? I brought up this point during our final conversation in November.

> Y. How do you see the difference between teaching as a "process" for your grades 11 and 12 students and teaching as "traditional craft" for your student teachers? As I see it, teaching as "process" could work for both categories of students.
>
> C. I think there are differences. The high school students are doing only one thing and that is learning, while the student teachers are not only learning but also teaching. It's a dual role they are performing. If they were only learning about teaching I would be more willing to stand back and be a facilitator...but in learning they are also teaching human beings. If I give them tips about some of the things I have learned in teaching they might be able to avoid costly mistakes. I am not saying that every tip will work perfectly for them. Neither do I force them to imitate my style of teaching. Mary (his student teacher) was independent to a large extent....She had her own teaching ideas and if they were working for her, I did not stop them. My tips were only given when she asked for advice....There may be some good in learning from some one else's experience...
> (3, 14-11-91).

As this final conversation came to a close we returned to Cliff's relationship with his student teachers. He revealed that through critical reflection upon his teaching he had moved away from many of the authoritarian approaches he had to teaching and now regarded teaching as an act aimed at enhancing human possibilities. However, the very nature of student teaching put him under pressure concerning decisions about how much autonomy he would give to novice teachers and how much he was willing to trade off the potential deleterious effects of floundering.

> C. Student teaching is an awesome experience for them (student teachers). There is so much they have to attend to--content, classroom management, grading, discipline....What makes it different is that teaching involves human beings. If you do not know how to deal with them in certain circumstances you could make mistakes with dire consequences.
> (3, 14-11-91).

Andy

Andy has taught social studies for five years at a public high school in Edmonton. After earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Bristol and a master's degree from the University of Birmingham in England, he had come to Canada as a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Following a graduate diploma in teaching he taught Geography as a sessional for four years at the University of Alberta, got married to a Canadian woman and decided to stay and work in Edmonton. When I met Andy, he was on secondment from his school to the university as a practicum associate. He was also one of the instructors in the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme and faculty advisor to Yashmine.

Because his experience of student teaching was obtained in England where the teaching practicum was structured differently from that at the University of Alberta, Andy told me that he had been a bit uncomfortable with the way the practicum component of the programme was structured.

> A. I don't think that the eight-week practicum provides enough school contact for the student teachers. I think the practical experience is too short to provide them with anything meaningful to reflect about. At the University of Bristol we had sixteen weeks of straight student teaching....I am not necessarily advocating that we extend student teaching here to a sixteen-week period but we should get certain schools where student teachers could continue to work with the students for a longer time than eight weeks. It's marvelous for gaining practical experience. (1, 26-9-91).

Another problem Andy saw with the programme was the two-week call-back session which required the student teachers to return to the university after being in their placement schools for four weeks in order to reflect on their experiences in the schools. Although he saw the session as being of tremendous benefit for the reflective programme he felt that the two-week period for doing it was too long.

> A. ....The call-back session is very useful for encouraging critical reflection upon practical problems but I think that two weeks for doing this is too long. Two or

> three days should be sufficient. One should not draw a time line where reflection on action is concerned. It should be an on-going process...
> (1, 26-9-91).

Despite these initial problems with the structure of the programme, Andy managed to function fairly well within it both as instructor and faculty advisor.

> A. ....I really liked my students this year...and I am enjoying my experience at the university.
> (1, 26-9-91).

I met Andy as a result of my role in the programme as "critical friend" to one of the instructors. We attended a few meetings together concerning the programme and, at first, he thought I was one of the course instructors but when I explained my research interest to him and requested his participation he indicated his willingness to give it. Between September 26 and November 14, Andy and I had three research conversations in his office at the university, each lasting for just over an hour.

During our first meeting he informed me that he had looked at the research questions which I had given to him two weeks earlier and thought that the first problem we needed to address was to make a distinction between "reflection" which was a part of practice for most teachers and "critical reflection" which involved reflecting on the taken-for-granted about practice with a view towards improving that practice. Andy values both types of reflection for teaching.

> A. To the extent that you reflect upon your teaching acts all the time --thinking about your experiences, what you did or should have done, you are engaging a commonsense approach to practice. To the extent that you reflect on what has hitherto been taken-for-granted in teaching in order to arrive at critical insights about everyday practice, you have a view of making things better. Both types of reflection lead to professional growth.
> (1, 26-9-91).

The relationship between teaching and reflection which Andy established right from the start guided the rest of our conversations and it emerged as a theme right from the beginning. In this first conversation our explorations of this theme took us into areas such as reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983, 1987), as well as the need for a shared meaning of what constitutes critical reflection in teaching. These are areas which have been surrounded by controversy in the discourse and practice of reflective teaching. For example, Andy agreed with Schon that competent practitioners are those who are able to reflect both in action and on action but, from his experience with student teachers, the latter type of reflection was more easily accomplished than the former.

> A. ....Their (student teachers') experience and repertoire are really too limited. Even experienced teachers find it hard to carry out reflection-in-action.
>
> Y. I agree with that observation. As teachers we are required to make too many spur of the moment decisions in order to respond to pedagogical situations that arise in the classroom. Usually we act before we know that we have acted. We have no time to deliberate in such circumstance. Reflection sets in only later. As Van Manen cautions, the important thing is to infuse immediate action with tact so that irreparable damage is not done...

Our conversations subsequent to this one focused mainly on the problems associated with critically reflective practice and during these discussions, Andy spoke more about some of the aspects of the programme he was finding difficulty with. These difficulties ranged from issues involved in evaluating critical reflection in practice, through the inclusion of action research which he regarded as essential to critically reflective practice but "too cumbersome" for student teachers, to the need for involving faculty advisors in the university component of the programme. Fundamental questions about the relationship between these issues and critical reflection in teaching were raised. For instance, Andy brought out the fact that student teachers and faculty advisors usually had different levels of concern with regard to evaluation. While the student teachers' concern was centred around more utilitarian understandings of classroom activities, that of their faculty advisors was more analytical and driven towards the inquiry processes that student teachers engaged in as critically reflective practitioners. Reconciling these two levels of concern in the evaluation process had been a matter of daily practical concern for Andy.

Our discussions about student teachers' utilitarian understandings took us into Andy's perceived need for skills and techniques for student teachers. He felt that although there was some danger in limiting teacher education to skills acquisition alone, he thought that teacher education programmes were required to provide the teaching skills which beginning teachers needed to be able to perform confidently in the classroom.

> A. ....You've got to have techniques and skills. It's like a surgeon or doctor....he or she has to have technical ability in order to perform well. Technique is the key aspect that drives many of the things that student teachers do...
> (3, 15-11-91).

Out of the thirty two topics that came up during our conversations four themes emerged for Andy which were important to the relationship between critical reflection and teaching:

1. Need for a shared meaning of critical reflection in teaching
2. The place of skills in critically reflective practice
3. Issues of evaluation in critically reflective practice
4. Faculty advisors need to be involved in the university component of the reflective programme

Theme one: Need for a shared meaning of critical reflection in teaching

The first thing that Andy mentioned during our first conversation was the absence of a shared meaning of what constitutes critical reflection in teaching among the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Although almost every department in the faculty was working towards the promotion of inquiry and critical reflection in teacher education, there was no set of commonly agreed-upon interpretations of the goals of critically reflective practice or how to go about achieving these goals. Andy had noticed this when he had looked at the reflective teacher preparation programme in the Department of Educational Administration.

> A. ....Critical reflection means many different things to many people. For example, take the EDADM 522 course which is aimed at critical reflection in practice. It is more concerned with the clinical supervision of student teachers because they are looking at teaching from a mechanistic, instrumental and technical viewpoint. Their programme is more concerned with a mathematical analysis of the student teacher-supervisor interaction than with the human experiences of the student teachers.... Our programme (EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354) in Secondary Education, on the other hand, is looking at teaching from a more holistic viewpoint, emphasizing general teacher growth and development through critical reflection. This is one of the problems we face in terms of perceptions of teaching...
> (1, 26-9-91).

I attempted to attribute the lack of a shared meaning of critical reflection among faculty to two things:

> Y.....First of all, it has to do with the nature of reflection itself. As soon as you give reflection a fixed meaning or definition that everyone should accept, you run into the problem of objectifying it and this straightaway takes away from its meaning as an "openness" and "questioning". .....Also faculty members are coming from different disciplinary backgrounds. For instance, Math is a very linear and structured discipline and someone with a mathematical background may be more concerned with mathematical and clinical analyses of teaching than with inquiry in the sense of openness...
>
> A. There is that, but there is also the fact that there is an absence of, or very limited discussions among faculty about the reflective programme. If you get right down to it, everybody is doing their own thing in the name of critically reflective practice.
>
> .....And we also ought to make a distinction between "reflection" and "critical reflection" in teaching. I think to the extent that the teacher is reflecting upon what he or she is doing, everybody does that....It's a natural part of the day to think about what one is doing. "Critical reflection, however, is different. What comes to mind as an example is "Phantom of the Opera". Part of the fascination is the mask. When you look at things in a critically reflective manner, I think it's time to get behind the mask and examine what is actually the essence of practice or certain decisions about practice. You take the mundane, ordinary and everyday occurrences and get behind them to understand them...
>
> Y. Are we talking here about taking the critical distance? I mean, distancing ourselves from practice in order to reflect on the meanings and significance embedded in it...
>
> A. Yes, the taken-for-granted as a sort of hidden meaning. You want to uncover certain behaviours in teaching and discover why they are done. The important thing is inquiry. You want to inquire into situations and uncover whose interest is being served and why. From what you discover, you could act to alter certain things. Of course, there are some things one cannot change and it's good to know the difference.
> (1, 26-9-91).

Three issues which we considered as important to the success of critically reflective practice emerged from this conversation. At the risk of objectifying reflection we felt that there was an urgent need for a common understanding of "critical reflection" in teaching among faculty in order to avoid idiosyncratic perspectives about the term. The second was the need to identify goals aimed at in critically reflective practice and activities to engage in order to achieve these goals. The third issue involved the dissemination of the common understanding and the goals among faculty. We found out that attempting to address these needs in a teacher education programme was inevitably leading us into definitions of what constituted critical reflection and that this was taking us farther away from the hermeneutic process of openness which is inherent in reflection. As we considered each issue in turn the term "inquiry" as an orientation to openness kept emerging as a necessary element in the goals and understandings of critical reflection in teaching. As Andy put it,

> A. ....You cannot leave out "inquiry" in the broader sense of openness to questioning in critical reflection and I believe this should be stressed in any programme aimed at preparing reflective practitioners. When I saw the Ohio State University reflective teaching programme, inquiry was limited to narrow questions about how techniques were employed by student teachers without going into questions about why the techniques were actually chosen and what implications they had for teaching...
> (1, 26-9-91).

Andy later explained that he had mentioned the Ohio State programme to buttress his argument that different things were being done in the name of reflective practice. While that particular programme was emphasizing the application of different classroom techniques without much critical reflection on their implications, the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 reflective programme at the University of Alberta was emphasizing critical reflection without providing enough experience by way of techniques for student teachers to reflect on.

> A. They are all considered as reflective approaches to the preparation of student teachers and yet the areas each is emphasizing differ so much...

(1, 26-9-91).

Andy attributed the University of Alberta's programme fragmentation to the absence of a coherent and well-co-ordinated effort across faculty in its preparation of critically reflective practitioners. As such each department had its own perception about critically reflective practice and was doing what it considered appropriate to promote that perception. He saw the absence of a shared perspective as a major constraint on the faculty's reflective teacher education programme.

> A. ....There should be an overall perspective regarding critically reflective practice--what it means, its goals and what we should do to achieve these goals. Faculty should make sure that each department is aware of this overall perspective and is working within it, irrespective of the discipline being taught.
> (1, 26-9-91).

Theme two: The place of teaching skills in critically reflective practice

Our second conversation was mainly centred around the place of technical skills in a teacher education programme oriented towards critical reflection in teaching. Andy felt that one of the shortcomings of the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme was that it did not provide enough exposure for student teachers to the technical skills that are needed by all novice teachers to perform comfortably and confidently.

> A. ....I felt that there was too much "critical reflection" going on without enough substance to reflect upon...
> (2, 20-10-91).

For instance, he felt that basic techniques of lesson planning and organization, presentation modes and classroom management skills, all of which constituted the so-called "survival skills" were not adequately provided for the student teachers. He considered technical skills as something which student teachers should master before being in the position to frame and critically reflect upon classroom events.

> A. Student teachers' concern about teaching skills is very genuine. They are concerned, for example, about skills to teach inquiry and critical thinking that we are telling them about. ....A student teacher from last year was asked to do the teaching practicum again because he simply did not possess the technical skills that would enable him to perform in the classroom. I think he should have gotten those skills from his teacher education here at the university...
>
> ....What, for instance, is the difference between co-operative learning and individual learning? When is each useful in the classroom? There is a place for each and the student teachers ought to know this, and how to go about teaching each. In something like role-play, for instance, student teachers need to have a certain amount of knowledge about classroom organization before they venture into role play. So skills are important....You might have creativity, etc., but you've got to have a priori technique to carry it through...
> (2, 20-10-91).

Clearly, for Andy, critical reflection presupposes familiarity with a knowledge base. Knowledge provides a basis to compare and contrast, even to test proposed practices. It was, therefore, important for student teachers to learn how to use classroom activities provided by course instructors in their own teaching. As Andy explained,

> A. ....I am not referring to a blind imitation of a professor's teaching techniques here. I am talking about presenting students with materials and instructional strategies derived from research or theoretical base, or from our own experiences...and then requiring the students to think critically about such strategies. They should particularly reflect on their implications for their own teaching.
> (2, 20-10-91).

We did not seem to be getting away from the view of critical reflection as instrumental mediation of action and I brought this out to Andy.

> Y. Is this any different from taking techniques derived from research findings and theories and applying them to practical situations in the classroom...?
>
> A. ....The difference is that critical reflection becomes a part of that application. I tend to see all knowledge as instrumental, or else we would not pursue it. There is nothing wrong with applying technical knowledge in an instrumental way as long as that application is accompanied by some critical reflection....The technical knowledge base we provide the student teachers with will be reflected upon, leading to adjustment or incorporation of each technique into their own personal teaching style. I just do not think that enough of these strategies were provided.
> (2, 20-10-91).

The crucial point that Andy was making here was what had emerged as a theme for Yashmine, a student teacher and, somehow, I was glad that it was being recognized as a critical issue in the reflective programme. Like Andy, I believed that student teachers needed to be provided with some technical knowledge in which to ground their reflection. The important thing to bear in mind regarding such provision was not to present techniques as immutable solutions to teaching problems.

Andy's argument was also addressing the distinction often made in some teacher education programmes between teaching as technique and teaching as reflective practice. For Andy a reflective mode and the teaching of technical skills need not be mutually exclusive. He captured the essence of his argument succinctly by using the metaphors of a tree and a doctor.

> A. ....It's all part and parcel of a solid tree having many branches. Some branches represent skills, others the human aspects of teaching and still others the implications of our teaching acts. All these areas need to be taken into consideration....I mean, it's like a doctor. He or she needs technical ability to perform well but, on the other hand, if the doctor does not have a proper bed-side manner or concern for his or her patients, then you might as well just have some kind of operating machine that comes in, does the job and leaves.... Teachers are not machines merely performing a job through the application of technical skills, at least I hope not. The care and concern for our students which we combine with the way we apply the technical skills is what constitutes pedagogy...
> (2, 20-10-91).

Theme three: Issues of evaluation in critically reflective practice

Evaluation as an issue requiring serious consideration in a teacher education programme oriented towards critical reflection in teaching emerged again in this study, this time at a thematic level in my conversations with Andy. While the student teachers and co-operating teachers I had conversed with saw evaluation as a constraint on critical reflection because it rendered some aspects of inquiry (such as inquiring into the reasons and rationales underlying practice) difficult to carry out, Andy saw the problem as inextricably linked with the very nature of evaluating critically reflective practice. When he had gone out to the schools as faculty advisor to his student teachers the first problem he had encountered lay in the way they perceived him.

> A. ....They saw me more as an evaluator than a consultant or advisor to them. I tried to relieve the tension by visiting them as a friend during the first week of student teaching, I chatted with them and assured them that I was there more to help them in their development than to evaluate their performance. I stressed the consultancy aspect of my job and told them that they were free to discuss anything they wanted because I believe that such discussions are very important to learning how to teach. But I wonder if they ever saw me as anything other than evaluator... (2, 20-10-91).

Because they only saw him as their evaluator, the student teachers usually appeared to be inwardly tense despite Andy's effort to make them feel relaxed. The facilitation of critical reflection requires that supervisors provide a climate of trust where experimenting and the inevitable mistakes that follow are encouraged, discussed, reflected upon and viewed as departure points of growth for student teachers. Such an atmosphere, however, is difficult to establish because the supervisor is also required, in some official capacity, to evaluate the performance of the student teachers. The "evaluative bind" (Grimmet & Erickson, 1990) was always present in the minds of Andy's students.

> A. They thought I was only waiting for them to make mistakes and that I would then jump on such mistakes and evaluate them in a negative way...
> (2, 20-10-91).

Andy knew that to be meaningfully related to the improvement of teaching, evaluation had to be more than a technical application of standards or an authoritarian relationship between himself and his students. He tried hard not to view evaluation as a method but as a communal, shared dialogue, but somehow, the student teachers always managed to turn their post-lesson conferences with him into an arena where they felt they had to defend everything they had done in class.

> A. It was sometimes depressing. I mean, there I was, trying hard not to appear as a judge or critic but as a friendly mentor they could trust...and all I got were justificatory discourses defending their actions...
> (2, 20-10-91).

Our discussion extended into another area of difficulty which Andy had experienced as an evaluator. This difficulty lay in the numerous concerns that had to be attended to in the evaluation of critically reflective practice. For a start, the level of concerns which the student teachers had regarding evaluation was totally different from that of his.

> A. When I spoke with them (the student teachers) during our post-lesson conferences, they were more concerned with content...what to teach and the resources and strategies of teaching it. And these were genuine concerns, as I said earlier. But my own concern with content, resources and strategies lay only in the extent to which these contributed to their general growth as teachers and how well they produced evidence of critical reflection based on active investigation of teaching and learning processes...
> (2, 20-10-91).

In other words, while he was looking at evaluation more holistically, the student teachers' perceptions were limited to utilitarian understandings of evaluation. While they were more concerned with short-term aims, such as whether a particular teaching method had worked to get the students through the lesson, he was more concerned with the long-term implications of the method. Andy told me that these differences had worried him because, if the student teachers were to become critically reflective practitioners, then a focus on short-term issues was never sufficient. They needed to go beyond that and pay attention to the long-term effects and wider issues involved in their teaching.

He also referred to the need for agreed-upon criteria which evaluators should consider in assessing critically reflective practice.

> A. ....There is need to know what to look for in assessing their (student teachers') teaching. For instance, when I was observing a class, it was difficult to concentrate on both the short-term and long-term issues at the same time. When you watch a class and you see that things have gone well, it is all too easy to evaluate the teaching only on that basis. I know I found myself doing this sometimes but then I had to go back and think about the long-term effects and then I'd evaluate the teaching all over again, this time with both short and long term implications in mind. It's easy to get confused if you don't know what you are looking for...
> (3, 14-11-91).

Because of the multiplicity of the criteria involved in evaluating critically reflective teaching, Andy thought it worthwhile to train supervisors to be able to know and analyse what to look for in critically reflective classrooms.

Theme four: Faculty advisors need to be involved in the university component of the reflective programme

For Andy it was not enough to choose experienced educators as faculty advisors to supervise student teachers. What was further required was their active involvement in the reflective programme so that common goals and means of realizing them would become explicit to all concerned.

> A. ....I was lucky because, apart from being faculty advisor, I was also teaching the course. So I knew what sort of teachers the programme was aiming at preparing. But what if I were not teaching the course? How would I know the goals of the programme?
> (3, 14-11-91).

The concern that Andy was expressing here was not unfamiliar to me. A few years back in Sierra Leone there was an attempt to move away from the structural approach to teaching the English language towards a more communicative approach which emphasizes language use. Student teachers in methods courses were taught to engage the communicative approach but because their supervisors in their placement schools were not familiar with the approach, they found it difficult to understand what the student teachers were doing in English Language classrooms. As such the student teachers were not receiving very positive evaluation from their supervisors and this led to a tension between the schools and the Department of Education, until the department decided to run workshops explaining the communicative approach to co-operating teachers and faculty advisors.

> Y. ....It was a very expensive venture, though. Imagine running workshops for English Language teachers and supervisors for a whole country...
>
> A. It could be pretty expensive but it would certainly be worth it. ....You are coming at teaching with your own experiences and perceptions of teaching, which may be completely different from what the Faculty of Education may be promoting in teacher education at a particular point in time. You might run into trouble with the faculty if, for example, it is working towards critically reflective practice in teacher preparation and you haven't got a clue what critical reflection is all about... (3, 14-11-91).

Because we were both involved with the programme we knew that the problem did not lie with a lack of intention on the part of the university to invite or welcome the involvement of faculty advisors and co-operating teachers. The problem lay with an effective means of doing so.

> Y. This difficulty came up when Cliff and I were talking about schools and the university working together to improve teaching. We both believe very strongly that co-operating teachers and faculty consultants should be involved in the university's teacher preparation programme, but we did not come up with an effective way of doing this...
>
> A. It's not easy, I grant that. There is the time element to consider for teachers, and the expense of organizing workshops...but we have to find a way of addressing these problems because they are a serious constraint on the effective realization of critically reflective practice. Improved teachers can only make a difference in improved teaching environments. I think if the workshops are run, say, during a particular vacation and teachers and those chosen as faculty advisors are given renumerations for fares and out-of-pocket spending, such as coffee and lunches, they might respond in a positive way.
> (3, 14-11-91).

But even as Andy made these speculations, we knew that the problem of supervisor involvement would not be easily resolved in the fostering of critically reflective practice. We were, however, happy that it had emerged as a problem requiring consideration in the structuring of a teacher education programme aimed at encouraging critical reflection in teaching.

Henry

Henry was a fellow graduate student in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. Prior to beginning graduate studies, he was teaching social studies in grades 10 & 12 at a high school in Edmonton. He was one of the instructors in the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR programme and faculty advisor to some of the students in that programme. Henry had served in both capacities in the programme for three years and felt that the structure of the programme was improving every year in order to meet the requirements of the students better and to realize the goals of the programme.

> H. ....It gets better every year. The feedback we get from the students helps us to re-evaluate the programme and its goals and we make changes where necessary. It's a reflexive programme that is being constantly renewed on the basis of knowledge gained from those experiencing it...
> (3, 3-9-91).

I was introduced to Henry by my programme supervisor a few weeks after my arrival at the University to do graduate studies in the Department of Secondary Education. Having been longer in the department, Henry was able to help me with choosing courses that were appropriate for my programme of study. I also received many valuable reading materials from him. Like me, he was investigating "critical reflection" in the teaching of social studies and when I asked him to become one of the participants in my study he responded eagerly and positively. As he put it, "We could work together on the topic and learn from each other" (1, 5-7-91).

Between July 5 and October 14, Henry and I had three research conversations in his office at the university, each lasting over one hour. The first of these conversations was a general exploration of my research topic and how I was going to approach it. I remember that he was particularly curious to know how I was going to address the cultural dimension of the study. He had said,

> H. Because you are a foreign student here, you want to be careful that whatever you research into in Canada is of some relevance to your own culture which, I am sure, is different than Canadian society. I am sure that the teaching context here is different than that in Sierra Leone...
> (1, 5-7-91).

After that brief cautionary note we had gone on to play around with different possibilities of conducting a research of this nature. Henry suggested that we start with an analytical examination of critical reflection.

> H. I mean an analysis of the review of critical reflection in the literature. We must think about the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective for teaching...
> (1, 5-7-91).

After discussing the three main approaches to critical reflection in the discourse and practice of teacher education (the technical, the interpretive and the critical approach) we attempted to define a possible orientation that would determine the way we thought about critical reflection in teaching. While Henry revealed that he was more hermeneutically oriented in his inquiry into critical reflection I told him that I was thinking about exploring both hermeneutics and critical theory as a research orientation.

> Y. ....My research methodology itself is going to follow the interpretive approach of hermeneutics but, coming from a background of colonial experience, I have been heavily influenced by critical theory....In fact my readings in critical theory have helped me question a lot of things about teaching in my country which continues to be very technically oriented. Both hermeneutics and critical theory are attentive to the intrusion of the technical into our practical lives...
> (1, 5-7-91).

This aspect of our conversation took us into Gadamer's hermeneutical methods and Habermas's critical approach to understanding situations. After exchanging a few more ideas, I borrowed a few books from Henry's bookshelf and we parted on the note that I would leave him a copy of my research questions in his mailbox.

When we spoke next on the phone Henry informed me that he was going away during the summer and because he was busy preparing for the trip we would not meet again till his return late in August. His return coincided with the re-opening of schools in

Edmonton and, since he was resuming his teaching duties at his old school, he was extremely busy getting ready for his classes during the last week of August. We were finally able to meet for our second conversation on September 3.

During this second conversation, Henry spoke about many concerns that he had regarding critical reflection in the teaching of social studies. These concerns had emerged as a consequence of his own research which was already underway, and from his experiences teaching the EDSEC 375/6 course. The concerns included:

1. The difficulty of defining "critical reflection" in any clear way:

> H. To tell you the truth...at this point, I am not really sure what critical reflection means with regard to our project in the programme and even in my own research...
> (2, 3-9-91).

2. The problem of "critical reflection" becoming another technique in teaching:

> H. ....What I am increasingly concerned about is its (critical reflection) being taught as another technique with a cognitive bias...
> (2, 3-9-91).

3 The difficulty of linking knowledge with action in critical reflection:

> H. Student teachers are reflective and critical about practice, but the practical action (doing something about a perceived problem beyond reflection) is quite problematic...
> (2, 3-9-91).

Our discussions about these concerns took us into the view of critical reflection as hermeneutical interpretation. Henry explained that since his return to his teaching position he had become increasingly convinced that critical reflection in teaching involved a hermeneutical process.

> H. I think we need to look at critical reflection more from the point of view of critical hermeneutics which does not mean critique, but recognizing difficulty and reflecting on how to work within it...possibilities for yourself as teacher in a difficult situation...
> (2, 3-9-91).

Henry's hermeneutical approach to critical reflection in teaching extended into our third conversation when we were talking about evaluation in a critically reflective teacher education programme. Contrary to popular opinion in education, Henry did not regard evaluation as something done to students. He saw it as a dialogical process during which both the supervisor and the student grew together through learning from one another.

> H. In evaluating critically reflective practice you do not approach evaluation with pre-defined items that you tick off against as the student teacher performs. Evaluation is an interpretive situation that you engage with your student teachers. You try to make sense of what they are doing as developing teachers...and help them in this development. .... It is a time consuming activity involving several analyses of actions as well as holding group discussions where experiences are shared....It's much more demanding than the traditional faculty advisor would accommodate. Sometimes, I used to spend the whole day with them (student teachers) in their schools...
> (3, 14-10-91).

We covered about thirty eight topics in our three conversations out of which five themes emerged as areas of concern over critical reflection and teaching for Henry. These were:

1. The difficulty of defining critical reflection
2. Critical reflection as hermeneutical interpretation
3. Critical reflection in defining self as teacher
4. The need to guide student teachers' reflection to make a difference to their practice
5. The problem of "praxis" in critical reflection

Theme one: Difficulty of defining critical reflection

While Andy had argued during our conversations for a common definition of what constitutes critical reflection which could guide participants in their endeavours at preparing critically reflective practitioners, Henry saw such definition as a prescription which betrayed the meaning of critical reflection in a fundamental way.

> H. ...Critical reflection means going beyond that which is said about it. If we give it a pre-set definition it means we are objectifying it and thus reducing it to the category of another technique. As I see it, reflection is an orientation towards openness...
> (2, 3-9-91).

Henry was particularly afraid that if practitioners understood critical reflection as a set of pre-defined prescriptions, it might be approached as "another technique in an educational landscape already littered with adopted and rejected techniques" (2, 3-9-91). Approached this way, critical reflection would become a passing fancy that will have its brief strut on the educational stage and then pass into oblivion.

We went on to talk about two definitions of reflective practice which are widely cited in the North American literature on reflective practice, that of Schon (1987) and Zeichner's (1987). While Schon defines the reflective practitioner as an individual problem solver possessing the knowledge and experience which enables him or her to stop in action to find a solution to a problem, Zeichner's definition is rooted in the critical tradition which sees the reflective practitioner as the transformative actor committed to improving schools and teaching through critical reflection on practice and the contexts in which practice occurs. Henry saw that implementing these definitions was a betrayal of the spirit of openness inherent in the idea of critical reflection.

> H. ....The post-structuralist response is to admit that we do not necessarily know what "critical" and "reflection" mean, and that we need to be open to alternatives and the speaking of "otherness"--other possibilities, other viewpoints, other experiences...
> (2, 3-9-99).

Henry explained that the orientation towards openness regarding the meaning of critical reflection in teaching was what had prompted the action research project in the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme.

> H. We could have simply implemented any of the existing reflective teacher education programmes. But we wanted to conduct our own inquiry into reflection in teaching. If we simply agreed with these already defined programmes, we would be closing down the question about reflection instead of looking at it as an orientation towards an open horizon in teaching.
> (2, 3-9-91).

Henry saw no comfort in figuring out a definition of critical reflection in teaching. For him, critically reflective practice was not so much a pre-defined set of prescriptions for teaching as it was a way of relating to young people, teaching acts and milieux, and to oneself as teacher.

> H. I see critical reflection in teaching more as having to do with how we as teachers could create possibilities for young people to learn...and possibilities to define ourselves as teachers. It involves attentiveness to students, content, context, etc. ...in other words being attentive to the very meaning of teaching and what it means to be a teacher...
> (2, 3-9-91).

Theme two: Critical reflection as hermeneutical interpretation of teaching

Henry believed that one way of maintaining an openness through critical reflection was by being more interpretively attentive to teaching. This implied a hermeneutical orientation in which one recognized the difficulty and complexity inherent in teaching and striving to work within them.

> H. Critical reflection involves having an interpretive approach to practice....In Caputo's sense, recognizing difficulty and reflecting on how to work within it. It strikes me now that I am back in the schools. I teach four classes and each is so different. I experience the difficulty of understanding individual students, relating to the curriculum, translating concepts into teaching activities, etc. All these require a hermeneutical interpretation...
> (2, 3-9-91).

Henry explained hermeneutical interpretation from the point of view of Ricoeur's "appropriation" which links interpretation with understanding a situation from within.

> H. .....Appropriation becomes important in the sense that you cannot assume an external, Cartesian stance trying to make sense of things from outside. You appropriate your teaching problem by allowing it to become your own...and you attempt to interpret it from the context in which it exists. The intent is to reflect on possible ways of addressing the problem, which is different than finding technical solutions to it. Some problems defy any clear-cut solutions....You recognize them and think about possibilities of working within them as teacher. The critically reflective practitioner is the teacher who learns to work in situations that are confusing and messy as we often find in education...
>
> Y. Does this possibility include dialogue? Vattimo (the Italian philosopher) regards hermeneutic interpretation on lines similar to what you are saying. He says that interpretation does not consist of external descriptions from a neutral position...but

> rather, it is a dialogic event through which participants arrive at new understandings...
>
> H. Yes. Much in line also with Gadamer's "fusion of horizons". I try to interrelate--with my students, my colleagues and others, and, together, we try to work out how we can come to a better understanding of our teaching problems. In a way there is comfort in that.
> (2, 3-9-91).

For Henry an interpretive approach lay in listening to "others" who dwell within the classroom and the teaching world. What each person says is important to informing our thinking about teaching. Aoki refers to this type of knowledge as "a reflective theming more concerned with what we might call a hermeneutic returning to the lived ground of human experience" (1990, p.2). According to Aoki, such theming allows teachers to know how sufficiently as humans they inhabit where they already are as teachers.

Theme three: Critical reflection in defining self as teacher

Both from his own research and from his experiences as course instructor and faculty advisor in the EDSEC 3756 EDPR 354 programme Henry found out that critical reflection played a major role in the unfolding awareness of oneself as teacher.

> H. Critical reflection is important in the finding of self as teacher. The most interesting form of reflection for the student teachers I have worked with has to do with their ownselves becoming teachers. As they reflect on what it means to be a teacher the question extends into whether they really want to become teachers and, if so, what kind of teacher they want to become. They think about conditions in schools and what kind of teaching these call for.
>
> ....There is also the personal dimension of teaching which require critical reflection on the part of the student teachers. For instance, why they want to become teachers, concerns about personal appearance and their personalities. This kind of reflection is going on all the time and it helps to define them as teachers...
> (3, 14-10-91).

Henry showed me the journal entry of one of his student teachers as she was struggling with where to draw the line in her teaching. She had written,

> I am not happy with the way I handled the lesson on Quebec Separatism in grade 11 today. I was glad that my co-operating teacher had given me permission to depart a bit from the prescribed curriculum and teach a piece of item that was currently an issue. But, somehow, I managed to bungle it up by doing too much. I did all the research and provided all the information for the students. I also tended to control the class discussion. Why do I still distrust the students to take charge of their learning? Why can't I learn to stand back? I need to let go of the feeling to do everything....It is not in my students' best interest.
> (Journal entry of "Mary", Feb. 10, 1991).

"Mary's" concern with where to draw the line between how much she should do as teacher and what her students should be left to do involved the personal struggle she was going through as the self as teacher was unfolding for her through critical reflection on her practice. Taking on too much responsibility in the form of doing all the research shows a kind of pedagogical caring, but realizing that she ought to let go and trust the students to assume some control of their learning reveals an even more pedagogical responsibility. As she reflected over the way she had handled the class that day, she came to the awareness that caring for her students also meant allowing them to assume some responsibility instead of spoon-feeding them with all the information. Such pedagogical "standing-back" reveals an attunement to the pedagogical "other", her students, so that she could come to hear them rather than continuing with her own pre-conceived notions of what was good for them.

Henry also revealed how, as course instructor, his own critical reflections were sometimes focused on himself as teacher educator. Because the programme was an action research project on critically reflective practice, it was like becoming aware of himself as teacher educator for the first time. One of his journal entries spoke of this awareness in the form of the tension between providing the certainty of techniques for his student teachers, and letting them confront the ambiguities of teaching.

> H. I still haven't escaped the trap of "giving" and "telling"...there is still a certain dependency built into the class....On the one hand, students always want more guidance....On the other there is frustration...that they are not overcoming their own dependency. I am not sure if these students are aware of that, and if that is one aspect of the feelings of lack of confidence.
> (Journal entry, Jan. 24, 1991).

In order to appear "competent" in the eyes of his students, Henry would have loved to give the unambiguous answers to teaching problems that his students were asking for, and which the competency approach to teaching requires. But as the pedagogue who must stand aside and create an opening through which his students could learn to stand on their own, he had held back, at the personal cost of his own image as teacher. He wrote:

> H. There is a more troublesome side to critical reflection--feelings of self-doubt. What is the relationship of critical reflection to self? Can self-doubt be a positive impetus for change? Are we not, in critical reflection, questioning the very being of ourselves as teachers?
> (Journal entry, Jan. 30, 1991).

As we can see, both Henry and his student teacher were able to arrive at a better awareness of themselves as teachers through the process of critical reflection. His experiences in this process were different from those of his student teacher because he had more experience as teacher and teacher educator, but they were both asking the same ontological questions of what it means to be a teacher and how much is too much responsibility in the classroom.

Theme four: Need to guide student teachers' reflection to make a difference to their practice

Because student teachers lack the necessary teaching experience, Henry thought that teacher educators should guide their (student teachers') reflection so that it makes a difference to their practice.

> H. Student teachers do reflect on what they are doing and on themselves as teachers. There is a pedagogical question for teacher educators, though--how to guide and channel that reflection so that it makes a difference to their teaching...
> (3, 14-10-91).

He then went on to tell me the story about another student teacher of his who had revealed in her journal that she was not going to go into teaching because she hated junior high school children.

> H. Much of her decision was based on her own school experience...mainly the things that junior high kids had done to teachers, but there was an absence of critical reflection on her part about why she was thinking that way...
> (3, 14-10-91).

Upon reading the journal he had invited the student teacher to his office and, together, they had analysed a few of the things that stood out uppermost in her mind about the behaviour of junior high children which were frightening her.

> H. ....She spoke about how the kids often spoke in a derogatory manner about teachers, about their deliberate plans to make life difficult for certain teachers by disrupting their class...and just being nasty generally...
> (3, 14-10-91).

As a student teacher, her practicum experience showed that junior high children had not changed much (for instance, they were mocking the way she was dressing). This experience and her re-collections about her own school days became a genuine concern which was influencing her decision about whether or not she should become a teacher. Henry had attempted to help her turn these experiences into something for her own teaching by asking her to think about each difficulty as she remembered it and reflect upon how best she could address them as a teacher.

> H. For instance, we probed the way in which she was dressing to go to school and found out that she was dressing in a manner the kids would consider as "cool" in order not to intimidate them. I tactfully explained to her that children did not admire a teacher who craved to be one of them. They want someone they can look up to. I suggested that, perhaps, she should try dressing like their teacher and not their peer. It was a difficult thing for me to say that to her but fortunately for me she was not offended...
> (3, 14-10-91).

By guiding her reflections about what she regarded as a genuine reason not to enter the teaching profession Henry was able to turn things around in a productive way for this student teacher who is now teaching in one of the junior high schools in Edmonton. Henry believed that this kind of thoughtful reflection about a perceived problem in order to arrive at an understanding of what is implicit in the problem and what action to embrace in order to deal with it was the hallmark of the critically reflective practitioner.

Theme five: The problem of "praxis" in critical reflection

Freire (1988) defines "praxis" as action that comes from thoughtful reflection. Henry recognizes that critical reflection in teaching has to be a praxis consisting of critical reflection on educational problems and action in order to bring about change. A critical component of inquiry and reflective practice is the linking of knowledge gained from reflection with action. However, Henry found that one of the problems with implementing critical reflection in teaching was that while student teachers did engage in reflection, action accompanying such reflection was usually absent.

> H. The action part of critical reflection is quite problematic. Student teachers do question certain practices in schools and in classrooms and they are quite critical when they talk about these things. But the action part of reflecting in this critical way is the problematic....There is a breakdown between critique and action... (3, 14-10-91).

He explained the gap between critical reflection and action in terms of certain constraints on student teachers during their practicum.

> H. They are new in their schools and so even though they might recognize a problem they might not know how to go about addressing it...
>
> .....Then there is the question of having enough time to do anything about a perceived problem. They are there for only eight weeks and they are too busy trying to survive the practicum within this period. This was one reason why they were not enthusiastic about the action research project. They had too much on their plate--trying to master content, worrying about teaching and management strategies, participating in extra-curricular activities, etc. I think it was a bit too much for them.
>
> ....Certain institutional procedures also constrain student teachers from doing things which they might consider as desirable or necessary in teaching. For instance, the fact that the co-operating teacher will be the final arbiter of whether or

> not they pass the practicum might force student teachers to manifest the "approved" ways of teaching as opposed to what they actually believe in....It will be the most politically expedient thing to do.
> (3, 14-10-91).

While the earlier part of this final conversation dwelled on the constraints on linking critical reflection with action for neophyte teachers, the second part turned inward, pointing to the problem that is inherent in teaching student teachers to be critically reflective without reducing critical reflection to another technique in teaching.

> H. ....For instance, the curriculum might present an authoritative view of history and a student teacher might want to move away from that towards a more critical reading of history but he does not know how to make the transition.
>
> Y. We may probably have to teach practical techniques of doing that...
>
> H. Precisely, and it's a bit of a dilemma. Like I cautioned earlier, we need to be careful not to reduce critical reflection to a set of teaching techniques, but, on the other hand, if we want teaching to go hand in hand with critique, we have to teach our students how to move from critique to action. Certain techniques are involved in doing this and we need to teach them...
> (3, 14-10-91).

Although there is need to guard against reducing critical reflection to pre-defined techniques, it must also be borne in mind that critical reflection in teaching is not meaningful if we simply think about it as some process that is delinked from action. I mentioned this to Henry.

> Y. Critical reflection has to be about something, mainly in the form of concrete experiences which student teachers go through. If we simply ask student teachers to be reflective without providing them with the tools by which they could translate that reflection into action, then the vital link between theory and practice, between reflection and action will be missing. This way reflection becomes purely an academic understanding.
> (3, 14-10-91).

Student teachers might encounter certain constraints on their effort to engage praxis in their practical situations, but their lack of technical knowledge to move beyond reflection and critique to real action in order to improve practice was an indictment on their teacher education programme that both Henry and I recognized.

Chapter V

Reflecting on Participants' Meanings of Critical Reflection in Teaching

A. Introduction

In chapter IV the participants in the research revealed their meanings of critical reflection and its relevance to their teaching. We arrived at these meanings by coming together as educators interested in improving educational practice and engaging in research conversations about critical reflection and teaching. This goal made it possible for us to distance ourselves from our work as educators and situate our research in the ground of practice where questioning about teaching begins and to which it always returns. By privileging the ear to hear the "sayings" (Michelfelder, 1989) about critical reflection and interpreting these "sayings" we have been able to better understand the relationship between critical reflection and teaching.

In this chapter I come to the reflective moment of the inquiry. Here I am guided by Gadamer's (1984) understanding of the function of hermeneutical reflection as discussed in chapter III of this study. We are reminded that hermeneutical reflection is the means by which we broaden and deepen our understanding through a constant stream of self-reflection. Hermeneutical reflection enables us to become aware of what is problematic in our pre-understandings and, by becoming critically aware of what is concealed in our every-day thinking and acting, we are able to renew our pre-understandings. In this sense, reflection does not consist of providing final solutions to given questions or suggestions for future research leading to new findings. Rather, it is a moment of re-appreciating our understanding from a deeper ground and opening ourselves to further questioning.

I will reflect on the meanings that participants have given to critical reflection by revisiting their themes as interpreted and discussed in the previous chapter. This will be done at two levels. The first level is reflecting on the content of the conversations in order to understand more deeply the meaning of critical reflection and its relationship to teaching and teacher education. The second level is reflecting on language and practices as they have emerged from the conversations in order to highlight the limitations of language in speaking about critical reflection and pedagogy.

B. **First level reflection**:

Revisiting participants' understandings of critical reflection and its relationship to teaching and teacher education

As we saw from the interpretations in chapter IV divergent understandings of critical reflection in teaching emerged among the participants in this study. In order to help the reader make sense of these understandings I have classified them under the following descriptions:
developmental, technical, ontological, interpretive and reconstructionist.

The developmental understanding of critical reflection is best represented in this study by Mary, Rick and Andy who saw the relevance and importance of critically reflective practice mainly in terms of its contribution to the teacher's or student teacher's professional and personal growth through reflective activities such as journal writing, action research and post-observation meetings between student teachers and their supervisors.

The technical understanding of critical reflection, exemplified by Yashmine, relates to the instrumental orientation to teaching within which critical reflection focuses to a large extent on the acquisition of specific technical skills and their application in classrooms to solve teaching problems. The craft view of critical reflection also falls under the technical orientation and it is represented in some ways by Cliff who understood his supervisory role mainly as the transmission of his accumulated professional experiences to the student teachers.

An ontological understanding of critical reflection in practice emphasizes the exploration of questions such as those relating to whether or not student teachers really want to become teachers and if so, what sort of teachers they want to be, the teacher's desire for an authentic pedagogical mode of being with his or her students, and the ways in which the educational milieux put constraints on this desire. Both Shelly and Henry spoke to the ontological aspect of critical reflection and teaching in this study.

The reconstructionist understanding of critical reflection emphasizes critical inquiry into educational texts (e.g. curriculum discourses and practices), teaching behaviours and the wider political, social, economic and cultural contexts within which teaching occurs. This is done with a view towards improving practice and bringing about social justice in educational practices. Both Mary and Rick seemed inclined towards this understanding of critical reflection.

Henry manifested an interpretive orientation to critical reflection by seeing it largely as a matter of situational praxis within which teaching is understood and interpreted in terms of its actual performance. Within this orientation critical reflection focuses on such things as students' individual differences which the average school curriculum does not take into account, phenomenological understandings of teaching situations and unique classroom occurrences which require the practical reasoning and decision-making ability of the teacher.

Each of these understandings of the meaning of critical reflection appears to bear some important relationship to teaching, for to be a competent teacher is to be critically reflective about not only what we do as teachers and our reasons for doing them, but also what we are and how we relate to the students with whom we are faced in our teaching situations. This relationship (between critical reflection and teaching) emerged among participants in many instances during our conversations. For example, Mary's conversations about her student teaching experiences sensitize us to the development of student teachers as they discover what teaching is and how one learns to become a teacher. The journey is often bumpy and painful but through critical reflection on self as teacher and upon practice, they are able to grow personally and professionally. Here is Mary speaking about herself as a wiser teacher after her practicum experience:

> Now I know just how much is too much responsibility. Towards the end of my practicum I learned to share classroom responsibility with the students... (2: 20-7-91).

Critically reflective practice also locates the teacher in a central position in education (Carson, 1991) in a milieu where the teacher is often used as a mere instrument of change. From Rick's conversation about his action research project, for example, we visualize the possibility of teachers developing themselves professionally by conducting research into their practice and acting in order to improve that practice and bring about what is educationally appropriate through thoughtful action (Rick, 3: 18-6-91).

With firm conviction, Henry defends his position that critical reflection lies in maintaining an interpretive approach to practice so that we attend to teaching as the flux that it actually is, not as we construct it:

> ....Critical reflection in teaching is really listening to teaching situations and interpreting them hermeneutically and phenomenologically, rather than attempting to apply methods developed in advance of teaching... (2: 3-9-91).

Shelly's regret that she cannot be a critically reflective teacher by "dwelling pedagogically" with her students because of the constraints of accountability in education (3: 12-11-91) is a clear testimony that she considers critical reflection important to meaningful teaching.

> Shelly: I am sure I could be a better teacher if I had the chance to practice what I believe in about teaching...
> (3: 12-11-91).

Even the apprenticeship approach to teacher preparation, as exemplified by Cliff and Yashmine, and which might first appear to contradict the critically reflective approach could be found to have some positive pedagogical value if the student teachers are required to make informed choices by subjecting "established" teaching methods and experiences to critical reflection.

Clearly then, the participants considered that there was an important relationship between critical reflection and teaching. During my reflections on this relationship, certain questions emerged as issues of concern. These were: First, considering the importance of this relationship, how can critical reflection be manifested as pedagogical responsibility in our teaching? Second, the content of the conversations appears to reveal a dichotomy between critical reflection as application of techniques and critical reflection as situational praxis involving an interpretive understanding of teaching. In view of this, how can the technical and the interpretive aspects of critical reflection be integrated in teaching? Third, if our current aim as teacher educators is to prepare a new breed of teachers oriented towards critical reflection in practice, how can we facilitate critical reflection in teacher education?

In my search for answers to these questions I returned once more to the texts of the conversations to see how the participants have addressed these questions. What follows in this discussion has emerged from the content of the conversations as they pertain to the questions and my own reflections on them.

Critical reflection as pedagogical responsibility towards the "Other"

The work of Max van Manen which asks how teaching as a being with children and young people can be thoughtfully embodied in practice implies that to be a teacher is ultimately to be someone for others. This concern for, and responsibility towards the "Other" appear to be the driving force behind critical reflection in teaching for the participants in this study. For instance, with characteristic eloquence, Mary narrated her journey from Teacher One when the focus was on herself, to Teacher Four when others (her students) became the focal point of her teaching.

> ....I should always remember that no matter what, the students come first... (Journal entry for March 28, 1991).

From excessive planning of lessons and obsession with subject matter knowledge (in order to be "effective") she moved to a position in her teaching where she recognized that organizational ability and background knowledge become secondary when meeting the children in the classroom. She learned that to be an "effective" teacher also means abandoning the excessive control of herself and her class that she began with, and become open to her students thus allowing their "newness" and her own vulnerability to emerge.

Critical reflection also translates into pedagogical responsibility when it becomes an openness to the "Other" manifested by attunement to differences in the classroom. Post-structuralists like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Cleo Cherryholmes have proposed that the orientation of Western metaphysics since Plato has been towards a "metaphysics of presence" or "logocentrism" (Smith, 1988, p.280) which has led to a tradition of truths taken to be of universal application and which effectively shuts out others--other voices, other cultures, other understandings and other meanings. Much of the knowledge that is taught in schools is presented as truths because it has the authoritative backing of some culture, textbook, or teacher. Derrida's (1984) projects of deconstruction decentre all meanings and emphasize the importance of the "differance" (difference and deferral) with which meanings are inhabited. Like the radical hermeneutic scholars before him (e.g. Husserl, Heidegger, Nietzche and Kierkegaard) Derrida believes that meaning is constituted and that what surfaces as a particular meaning or truth only does so on the basis of the suppression of something else. Following Derrida, Rick with a background in post-structuralism and critical theory, saw all textual content (curriculum, textbooks, institutional practices, classroom knowledge) as texts to be deconstructed rather than as immutable realities. The thrust behind his "democratic" approach to his classroom relationship with his students seemed to be the desire to activate their voices which have traditionally been rendered silent because teaching has been viewed and executed as the impartation of universal truths in situations of authoritative relationships between teachers and students. His attempts at creating a "democratic" teaching environment in his grade eleven classroom were aimed at confirming the "otherness" of his students by allowing their different points of view on issues to emerge. Unfortunately, the students themselves denied their own “otherness” by resisting this type of pedagogy, in favor of one oriented towards the transmission of ready-made knowledge.

Implicit in Andy's emphasis on 'growth' in his teaching and supervision of student teachers, in Cliff's emphasis on teaching "values" and in Shelly's "pedagogical responsibility" is a view of critical reflection as a concern and caring for others. Teacher growth, both personally and professionally through thinking on practice, has always been at the core of the call for critical reflection in teaching (Dewey, 1933; Roth, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1987; Schon, 1983, 1987; Elliot, 1991). Indeed, critical reflection itself is about thinking at a time when there are no longer any clear-cut answers to many educational problems. Heidegger (1969) notes our proclivity for not thinking when he writes:

> ...most thought-provoking for our thought-provoking times is that we are still not thinking. The reason is never exclusively or primarily that we men (sic) do not sufficiently reach out and turn toward what properly gives food for thought; the reason is that this most thought-provoking thing turns away from us...(p. 17).

For Heidegger, the real threat to thinking lies in our view of the realm of our being (in this case teaching) as representational. The representational world of teaching which we have created consists of grand designs that produce competence in teachers and defensible educational outcomes in students. Such designs actively discourage critical reflection about teaching and teacher education and the absence of such reflection usually means an absence of growth on the part of practitioners. Andy recognizes this and for this reason he desires critical reflection in student teachers to be an on-going process that perpetually accords them the opportunity to dig beneath surface terrains and critically inquire into practice in order to achieve professional and personal growth (1: 26-1-91).

Cliff's perception of himself as the pedagogue who not only knows but also cares for the "Other" manifested itself during our discussion about the teaching of values in social studies. The pedagogue is the adult who shows the child the way into the world and this involves entering into a relationship with the child that cannot permit a "laissez faire" attitude on the part of the adult.

What makes the pedagogical relationship ethical is that it is not symmetrical. As Buber (1965) notes, "the experience of envelopment" characteristic of a dialogical relationship is one-sided in a pedagogical relationship:

> ....He (the educator) experiences the child's growing up but it (the child) cannot experience the educator's. The adult stands at both ends of the shared situation, the child at only one...(p36).

In such a relationship the adult carries the responsibility of giving the child the direction and security which the child needs.

Such responsibility is what makes Cliff feel that, though he would always leave his students as much as possible to their own decisions, freedom and consciences, he also always sees it as his responsibility to teach them how to distinguish between right and wrong. He will be failing in his duty as pedagogue if he fails to teach his students those norms and values which he, as a responsible adult, has found to be desirable. Remaining aware of being pedagogically responsible for the "Other" in this way is what constitutes critical reflection in teaching for Cliff (2: 28-9-91).

Shelly extends this responsibility to the point where she considers herself as taking a position at "midpoint" (Taubman, 1991) when facing the students in whose gaze she came to be a teacher. To be in a midpoint position as teacher is to acknowledge the needs of one's students without falling prey to those needs, and creating the conditions from which the knowledge that the students already possess emerges. For this reason, she would love to assume an ignorance that would allow her to listen more to her students so that she could learn their unconscious knowledge and teach it back to them. Knowledge constructed in such encounter would be a dynamic between herself and her students, and her individual figure as the constituting figure of discourse is dissolved and replaced by various subject positions opened within classroom discourse itself.

As the texts of the conversations reveal, it is when we consider our pedagogical practices in the light of the inevitability of the "Other", that embodied "Other" who is the student, that we can truly be committed to critical reflection in practice.

Integrating the technical and the interpretive in critical reflection

What became apparent in this study was that the dichotomy revealed in the literature between critical reflection as instrumental application of teaching skills and techniques and critical reflection as an interpretive being with students also emerged among the participants in this research. For Yashmine and Andy, especially, critical reflection was largely focused on the application by student teachers of the technical skills acquired in teacher education. Others (e.g., Mary, Shelly, Henry) saw critical reflection as a response to the reified view of skills and knowledge inherent in the technicist vision of effective teaching which denies the interpretive understanding and "ethical know-how" involved in teaching. Both of these positions speak in some important way to teaching, but to adopt either position as an alternative to the other in teacher preparation is to be caught up within an either/or way of thinking about teaching. As well, to allow either position to totalize our understanding of teaching is to ignore the "ideological fixedness" that each might contain. Such binary thinking leads to the production of a certain "master signifier" which urges us to interpret teaching in its own particular way. As Foucault (1980) makes us aware, all forms of fixed knowledge hide the nostalgia for the power for intellectual domination. Genuinely hearing the voice of teaching lies neither in this or that particular conceptual model to be accepted without questioning, nor in the simple choice of one model of teaching over another. What is needed is a break-away from any reification of knowledge that does violence to our freedom of thinking about teaching, and also the awareness that meaningful teaching cannot be separated from critical reflection.

Noordhoff and Kleinfeld (1990) have argued that the dichotomization of teaching into critically reflective practice and technical performance appeals to two sets of people. The first set are those who see the development of critical reflection as an activity of more worth than the development of technical skills. In this view, teacher education programmes are guided by the belief that teaching is a complex professional activity involving the elevation of teachers' concern beyond the mundane of mere technical acts to include critical inquiry and considerations of ethical questions and the raising of the level of teachers' thinking. Teacher education programmes, then, should educate, not train. The second set are those who see critical reflection as an activity indicating less skill than actual expert teaching performance. This view leads us to ask whether the thinking that teachers do in all phases of instruction counts as reflective inquiry. It views critical reflection as a relatively analytical act with little room for intuitive technical knowledge. As these opposing conceptions of the relationship between critical reflection and teaching performance continue to be played out in teacher education programmes, they tend to keep these two aspects of teaching at a distance from each other.

This ongoing tension has also been revealed in this study. Perhaps it is well that the two perspectives have emerged in the conversations, for teaching is a way of being that is both technical and interpretive. Teacher education programmes should provide the legitimate needs of student teachers for technical skills such as planning, classroom organization and management, student evaluation and specific methods of teaching certain contents. These are "the tools of the trade", (Andy, conversation 3) which student teachers, in their lack of teaching experience, need in order to perform confidently. The provision of technical skills, however, has to be balanced with the awareness that the skills are to be applied in practical situations requiring considerations of phronesis as discussed in Chapter III. Aristotle reminds us that technical reason assumes the application of specific, pre-defined, technical knowledge in a universal manner while practical reason understands that such knowledge is always applied according to the exigencies of the concrete situation. It follows that technical knowledge should not be separated from thoughtful reflection upon the application of such knowledge in practical situations. As Andy argued (conversation 3) we need to adopt an integrative stance in our conceptualization of critical reflection in teaching. We need to explore how we can integrate reflective inquiry that focuses on contextual and ethical issues with technical performance for the benefit of prospective teachers. Carr and Kemmis (1983) have referred to such a stance as constituting a "strategic view" which recognizes both the technical and the ethical dimensions of teaching.

Facilitating critical reflection in teacher education

The question that often faces educators interested in promoting critical reflection in practice is: What is the best way to prepare teachers who are critically reflective? In other words, what type of teacher education programmes can be offered to orient student teachers to critical reflection in the profession? Some educators (e.g., Richardson, 1990) have argued that although this question is not unimportant, it is embedded in the positivistic approach to research and implies erroneously that answers to such a question through research will provide the form and substance of teacher education programmes focusing critical reflection in teaching. The main concern of these educators has been that the question assumes a clearly defined way of conceptualizing critical reflection, a way in which teachers learn such reflection and programmes designed to develop learning that matches the paradigm inherent in the concept. This observation echoes Henry's underlying concern when he spoke about critical reflection becoming another technique to be mastered and applied by teachers in a mechanical way (conversation 2).

As evidenced from the literature and this study, one of the problems with developing an across-the-board content and process for critical reflection in practice lies with the range of its conceptualization. As such critical reflection and ways of fostering it in teacher education programmes have been rendered a matter of norms and values for those wishing to embark upon the encouragement of reflectivity in education.

The participants in this study spoke about different ways in which critical reflection could be facilitated in teacher education. Many of the strategies they referred to are not new in the discourses and practices of critical reflection and some have already been researched and tried out in teacher education programmes. For example, reflective journal writing and action research which both Mary (conversation 3) and Rick (conversation 2) spoke about have been found to make an important contribution to the development of reflection in student teachers (Copeland, 1986; Zeichner & Liston, 1987; Hultgren, 1988). These strategies are already being employed in the reflective practice oriented programmes at the universities of Wisconsin, Alberta, Florida and Oxford Polytechnic. What is new about these strategies that has emerged in my study is that, though the student teachers did acknowledge that the strategies contributed to the development of critical reflection for them, they also pointed out very strongly that they found journal writing time consuming and action research almost impossible to carry out effectively during the teaching practicum because of student teachers' lack of experience in recognizing what is problematic about their teaching deserving of critical inquiry. This leads us to question whether, on their own and without being a programme requirement, student teachers would employ these strategies as vehicles for critical reflection.

Both Andy and Shelly stressed the importance of developing collaborative relationships between the university and schools, and Rick spoke about the necessity of providing a supportive atmosphere where mistakes in teaching made by student teachers are allowed and regarded as points of departure for growth. As vehicles for enabling the facilitation of critical reflection in teacher education, these two strategies have also been emphasized by Grimmet and Erickson (1990) but, as the research has shown, the strategies carry attendant problems that deserve the attention of those developing a teacher education programme oriented towards critical reflection in teaching. For one thing there is still a lot of confusion over how the university can actually get school teachers involved in its teacher preparation efforts. For another, providing a supportive atmosphere for student teachers requires that all those who supervise student teachers are thoroughly committed to the idea of critical reflection in practice and are willing to encourage it in their student teachers. But, as Yashmine's experience with her co-operating teacher revealed, this is not always the case and the problem presents a serious threat to the effectiveness of the reflective programme.

During our conversations about facilitating critical reflection in teacher education, three issues emerged that deserve to be highlighted in this reflective chapter. This is not because they are new in the discourse about critical reflection in practice but rather because of the questions that surround them in such discourse. The three issues are: developing a common definition of critical reflection; employing inquiry as a critically reflective teaching method; the place of evaluation in a teacher education programme oriented towards critical reflection in teaching.

Developing a common definition of critical reflection

Ross (1990) has argued that the articulation of the meaning of critical reflection is an important first step in the development of any teacher education programme aimed at encouraging and promoting critical reflection in teaching. During our first conversation, Andy echoed this sentiment when he stressed that, indeed, for teacher educators to facilitate critical reflection in a teacher education programme they have to agree on what it means to be a critically reflective practitioner. However, the disagreement in the research between Andy (who saw the need for a shared meaning of critical reflection) and Henry (who argued that any fixed meaning would close down the openness inherent in the idea of reflection) seems to point to the controversy surrounding the development of a common definition of critical reflection even among those working in the same educational institution. One of the problems that Andy noted with the reflective teacher education programme at the University of Alberta was that faculty has not attempted to evolve a programmatic commitment to the development of critical reflection in teaching (conversation 1). Consequently, most efforts at developing critical reflection in student teachers have occurred within specific programme components, each with its own meaning of critical reflection and strategies of fostering it in teacher education. The situation is not unlike most teacher education programmes where the images of teaching that shape educators' decisions about educational opportunities provided to students are individually constructed and, as Simmons and Sparks (1987) express it, "only held implicitly in each person's mind" (p.2). In the midst of the proliferation of meanings surrounding the usage of the common terminology "critical reflection" the question that arises is whether or not there is a need to formulate a meaning that can hold together those functioning within a community attempting to prepare teachers inclined towards critical reflection in practice. If so, what should constitute such meaning?

Ross (1990) points out that when such differences (as those that have emerged from the discourse about critical reflection in practice) exist within programmes the messages sent to students may be confusing, thus undermining the effectiveness of the programme. Ross's strong argument points to the necessity to articulate a "working meaning" of critical reflection that could guide the activities of faculty members in their preparation of critically reflective practitioners. I share Barnes's (1987) view that any teacher education programme with a strong thematic focus (such as reflective practice) should present a clear view of the sort of teaching it aims to promote and that such view be made familiar to those involved in the programme. While it could be argued that to give critical reflection an immutable definition is to situate it within a fixed language that constrains the openness inherent in the idea of reflection itself, I think that the relativism that presently accompanies the meaning of critically reflective practice seriously undermines its effectiveness as a teaching proposition. This is not to say that, for the idea to be effective, educators must give it a fixed meaning that has universal applicability. Rather, each community of educators should articulate to those involved with critically reflective practice what it should be reflective about (content), how intended goals are to be realized in teacher education (process) and means of evaluating their progress. Particularly, the social and economic contexts in which teachers work should provide the content of critical reflection for any community of educators. For instance, new demands are constantly being made on teachers as today's classrooms become increasingly international and heterogeneous in nature. Also, as the world generally experiences economic recession and schools face financial cut-backs and a shrinking job market for their graduates, schooling is turning away from a pedagogy grounded in critical inquiry and ethical considerations and focusing more on control, prediction and measurement--in other words, instrumental reasons for teaching and learning. Any articulation of a "working definition" of critical reflection in teacher education programmes should include meanings about how best to prepare teachers to educate in a humane manner in these circumstances. Of course, content, process and means of evaluation should be open to constant re-appraisal and renewal as the situation warrants. In this way the articulation will carry within it the uncertainties which characterize teaching and the open-mindedness to alternative views that constitutes genuine reflection.

Inquiry as a critically reflective teaching method

As an attempt to go beyond preparing student teachers in mere technical competence in teaching, the critically reflective programme aims to situate teaching within its socio-historical contexts and to emphasize the socially constructed nature of schools and school knowledge. Several educators (e.g. Beyer, 1984; Feiman, 1979; Zeichner & Liston, 1987) have argued that by helping student teachers see curricula as negotiated between teacher and student and as guided by educational and ethical values, students assume a more active role in curriculum construction and evaluation. As such, inquiry has been emphasized as a major component of a teacher education programme targeting critical reflection as a goal.

As the participants in this study indicated, conducting action research and curriculum analysis (Rick, conversation 2), encouraging pedagogical habits of self-directed growth (Cliff, conversation 3; Shelly, conversation 2), emphasizing Schwab's heuristic of the "commonplaces" of teaching (Henry, conversation 3) are a few examples of activities engaged by educators to help students become more proficient at inquiry in their own learning and in their teaching. The inquiry component not only promotes student teachers' understanding of the contemporary cultures of their classrooms and the relationships between educational contexts and the political, social and economic milieux (Zeichner & Liston, 1987), it also enables them to contribute to the construction of educational knowledge and the encouragement of inquiry as an attitude toward learning in their own students.

But valuable as inquiry is in helping students conduct self-directed investigations into complex social issues, some criticism surrounding its use in certain teaching situations also emerged in the study. For example, Shelly expressed some dissatisfaction that in the Alberta social studies curriculum, a contradiction exists between inquiry as an orientation towards learning through questioning and inquiry as a technically constructed model designed to produce results (conversation 1). Inquiry involves genuine investigation into meaningful and worthwhile social issues but in the Alberta curriculum, inquiry is presented as a model that involves a rigid and rationalized process which students and teachers follow to arrive at already pre-defined conclusions. Shelly saw the process as contrived and manipulated and, therefore, inappropriate for her students. Additionally, she revealed some anxiety during our conversations over what Carson (1984) refers to as "the erosion of practical reason" of the teacher within the implementation of the social inquiry curriculum. Explaining the consequences of hermeneutics for praxis, Gadamer notes that the chief task of hermeneutic philosophy is to defend practical reason against the domination of technology based on science and to "vindicate again the noblest task of the citizen--decision-making according to one's own responsibility, instead of conceding the task to the expert" (quoted in Wachterhauser, 1986, p.158). Shelly noted that the practical reason and decision-making responsibility of educators regarding the way social inquiry is conceived and implemented have been usurped by technical experts who have transformed inquiry from an emancipatory activity to a standardized set of procedures to be followed (Carson, 1984, p.229). It would appear from these observations that except inquiry is properly conceived and adequately implemented as an open-ended process of searching for knowledge by students of their own volition, the method will not serve a useful purpose in thinking seriously about teaching.

Ironically, it is the individuality inherent in inquiry as a process of self-directed search for knowledge that makes inquiry so difficult to implement in classrooms in Africa. Salia-Boa (1987) for example, has argued that the inquiry approach to teaching and learning is an American idea rooted in progressivism (Dewey, 1938). He explains that proponents of progressivism believed that a child who is exposed to inquiry learning, problem-solving and project methods through an open-ended curriculum in a democratic classroom will acquire an objective, critical mind thus making him or her an independent, hardworking individual (p. 38). He argues that the approach creates conflicts in African children (and teachers) because it contradicts the indigenous African educational system.

A look at indigenous African education validates Salia-Boa's argument to a considerable extent. In most African homes children learn by observation and imitation where the acquisition of objective knowledge through inquiry is not actively encouraged. Since the ability to discriminate between essential and non-essential knowledge is considered a largely adult responsibility in Africa, it is expected that the teacher, as the representative of the parents, should impart the bulk of what the child learns. Teachers would, therefore, find it difficult and conflicting to give up this responsibility and stand aside as mere facilitators of learning. Also, the doctrine of self-interest and self-activity that is supposed to foster individual improvement in Western children runs contrary to the African educational aim of "group improvement", "community betterment", "interdependence" and "the good life for all". Any African is only considered human when he or she works actively with others for the benefit of the society. Individualism which is encouraged by the structure of Western curricula is not tolerated in traditional African communities. Africa has been extensively criticized by some Westerners for adhering to this "social bonding" aspect of the African tradition, which has been described as a primitive and backward practice that lacks competitive individualism and leads to what Lance Morrow, in a recent article, refers to as "loss of opportunities and options" (Morrow, 1992). Much of this criticism, I would argue, stems from the different visions of reality which Westerners and Africans have. For Africans, social bonding through the family and the community is what gives meaning to life and this is often not traded off in a bid for individual success. Motivations for individual success, as opposed to consideration for collective success, has been identified as one of the main reasons for the massive brain-drain from Africa to more economically advanced countries. It has been described as one concrete example of "modernization by Westernization" having a detrimental effect on the socio-economic development of many African countries. For these reasons, some African educators (e.g. Nyerere, 1972; Buchanan, 1975; Salia-Bao, 1987) have advocated that for curriculum to be effective in Africa, it has to be grounded in "African communalism" based on the principles of equality and respect for human dignity, collective success through the sharing of resources produced by group effort, work by everyone and exploitation by none.

While my own experience of teaching inquiry in Sierra Leone confirms the contradiction in children between the indigenous education they receive at home and the independent, individual, open-ended process involved in learning through inquiry, I do not think that inquiry should necessarily be discarded as a teaching/learning approach in Sierra Leone. Inquiry encourages the kind of critical thinking, creativity and reflective decision-making that colonial education discouraged and which indigenous education suppresses. It gets children out of dependency as learners and discourages the rote memorization which constitutes the knowledge transmission that is so much a part of classroom reality in Sierra Leone. At a time when foreign ideas about development are putting tremendous strain on our economy, we need citizens who are critical thinkers who question certain values and engage in proper investigation of issues before making decisions or reaching conclusions. As learning through inquiry has been found to be effective in developing these qualities, teacher preparation in inquiry teaching methods becomes very crucial. In the right hands inquiry need not become an individualized activity that leads to sadistic exploitation of others as some African educators have claimed. Teachers would need adequate preparation in how to channel critical reflection towards inquiry techniques that ensure both the child's individual development and that of the community.

The more difficult problems regarding inquiry teaching in African countries are more deeply rooted than teacher preparation in inquiry techniques. Inquiry methods call for ideal conditions of both space and time and these are rarely available. As our experience of employing inquiry to implement the Social Studies project "Man in his Environment" showed in 1972, poorly constructed classrooms, inadequate physical space for the large number of children, inadequate instructional materials and library facilities all presented obstacles in the schools. In addition, the greatest danger to any method of teaching that encourages questioning and critical thinking lies in the threat it might create to adult authority, including the authority of the teacher. Indeed, some educators have even asked whether the approach, with its inherent permitted freedom based on the child's interest, will not destroy the authority of the elders and parents and, thus, the very structure of the whole society. In Chapter 6, I shall argue that changing circumstances are increasingly making it necessary for us to move away from a tradition of teaching that closes possibilities for our children to grow up as critical inquirers.

Evaluation in a critically reflective teacher education programme

Evaluation of the reflective process continues to pose problems for teacher education programmes which target critical reflection as their goal in teaching and teacher preparation. One reason for the difficulty is that, as Ross (1990) has noted, reflection is a complex, mental process that is difficult to assess. Although most evaluation efforts have used qualitative methods to collect and analyze data (e.g. analysis of work done by students in journals and assignments) what appears to be quantitative assessment has also been employed to assess student teachers. For example, checklists of behaviours which student teachers have to exhibit and which supervisors are trained to look for have been developed and refined to facilitate the assessment of student teachers in certain teacher education programmes aiming at critical reflection in teaching (e.g., the Oxford Polytechnic B.Ed.

teacher education programme). However, the question remains whether a mental process like reflection can be reduced to a set of observable behaviours or whether in fact it is possible to develop a definition of critical reflection with enough specificity to measure it quantitatively (Simon & Sparks, 1987; Ross, 1989b).

In this research, while some of the participants (e.g. Shelly, Cliff, Andy) saw the evaluation of the progress of student teachers as a means of assessing whether the programme's goals were being realized, others (e.g. the student teachers: Rick, Yashmine, Mary) saw evaluation mainly as a constraint on genuine critical inquiry based on critical reflection and questioned its suitability in their teacher education programme. Rick, for instance, questioned the extent to which it is possible to achieve better appraisal through the use of a checklist of behaviours on two grounds. Firstly such a checklist is usually constructed within a framework that necessarily includes epistemological positions and political and moral values about education. As Ashcroft and Tann (in Cliff et al., 1990) have also argued, the evaluation of student teachers is not independent of such a framework. The crucial question that Rick seemed to be asking during our third conversation in this regard appeared to relate to value judgment in evaluating critically reflective practice. Simply expressed, is it possible for student teachers to be fairly evaluated when their tutors and supervisors have values? Secondly, Rick argued that no checklist of short-term behaviours is able to determine whether teachers continue to use inquiry-oriented approaches to teaching after their pre-service years (conversation 3).

The touchstone of critically reflective practice is critical inquiry based upon Habermas's "ideal speech situation" where everyone (students, tutors, supervisors) speak their minds without censorship. But my conversations with the student teachers in this study revealed that this could be problematic because some members of this triad necessarily have more power than others. Recall Mary's reference to the evaluation process as "a power relationship with the student at the bottom" (conversation 3). She spoke about being afraid of taking initiatives in her social studies class because her co-operating teacher might interpret her creativity as a challenge and give her teaching a negative evaluation (conversation 2). For similar reasons, Yashmine became genuinely afraid of questioning the teaching behaviours of her co-operating teacher by whom she felt intimidated. One question which might emerge from such a scenario would be: what are the implications of a constraint such as evaluation for critical inquiry?

The uncomfortable position in which students' assessment puts supervisors was also referred to in the conversations. Cliff, for instance, spoke about how the student teachers he supervised seldom asked questions that had critical implications because they were afraid to do so:

> ....Usually, if they (the student teachers) ask questions they are about how to deal with a specific classroom difficulty...(Conversation 2).

Andy also expressed his dissatisfaction with the "evaluative bind" which always made his student teachers perceive him more as their evaluator with their "future" in his hands, than as a friend interested in their personal growth as teachers (conversation 2).

It would appear from the foregoing that educators still have to find effective ways of assessing critical reflection in practice that are non-threatening to student teachers, non-constraining on critical inquiry and that takes into account long-term commitments to the critical inquiry entailed in critical reflection. One way of addressing this problem, according to Ashcroft and Griffiths (1989), is that since the critically reflective teacher must be self-critical, the assessment process must be an on-going one involving "triangulated" discussions among the student teachers, tutors and supervisors. The student teacher's progress is discussed among this triad according to a set of criteria which should give the student teacher a profile of achievement in various aspects of his or her teaching. I think this suggestion is worth a try because, in my opinion, although the authority and power imbalance in this relationship denies the student teacher equal status, the process at least provides the student a voice in his or her assessment in the teacher education programme.

Whether the process is an effective way of accurately evaluating critical reflection in student teachers is still open to questioning.

C. Second level reflection: The limitations of language in speaking about critical reflection and teaching

In this section of my reflections on the participants' meanings I focus on the limitations of the language that have emerged from the conversations about critical reflection and teaching and teacher education. Earlier on in this chapter, I made reference to the either/or, binary oppositional language in which conversations about teaching have been couched. On the one hand are those with a technicist approach and put an excessive focus on the techniques of teaching, and not enough emphasis on the political, social and moral implications of the teaching act and the social-political role of the teacher as a responsible, moral actor. On the other are those who view teaching as a critically reflective practice which redirects attention to the wider political and social contexts in which teaching occurs, arguing that teachers should play a central and political role in interpreting, acting and critically reflecting on questions that arise out of these contexts. Both of these languages have their places in the discourse of teacher education, for teaching is as much a technical act as it is political. However, as Carson (1991) asks, do they deserve a central place in the discourse?

The dominance of these two languages in the discourse about teacher education has been so prevalent that there has been a tendency to take them to be representational of all teaching and ignore their deconstruction to reveal something else that might have been submerged. What has been submerged or pushed to the margin in the discourse is the language of pedagogy itself as experienced by practitioners who dwell thoughtfully with students in classrooms. Although teacher education programmes aiming at reflectivity specify the development of critically reflective teachers as their goal, their actual and ultimate goal is improved teaching and learning in classrooms. Such a goal carries within it a pedagogical caring and concern for students. However, as this research has revealed, conditions do exist that constrain this kind of orientation to teaching, and , by implication, a pedagogical way of being with students. The constraints emerge in the contradictions between the language and the actual practice of critical reflection, revealing an absence of any similitude between the two.

One such contradiction that emerged in this study is that between accountability and responsibility in practice. Shelly spoke to this contradiction during our third conversation which had critical reflection and pedagogical responsibility as its focus. The discourse about critical reflection often speaks about reflective teachers as autonomous and responsible professionals who are guided by a disposition to act truly and rightly in the interests of their students. This rhetoric, however, has not been accompanied by the freedom and empowerment that enhance such disposition (Shelly, conversation 3). Houston and Clift (1990) have pointed out that the extent of constraints and scope of reflective inquiry are complementary concepts; the greater one becomes, the lesser becomes the other. When legislatures and regulatory bodies such as school administration and examination boards require a specific content or process and dictate a time frame within which to implement such curriculum, teachers' freedom to act in the best interests of their students is severely reduced. In other words, even though the critically reflective practitioner is expected to relate to students in a manner more responsible than a technicist would, the technological and materialist views of education have created structures that impede the realization of the broader goals of education envisaged by critical reflection in practice. Within the expectations about "outcomes" of schooling the teacher is largely a craftsperson moulding his or her students like clay into already defined shapes. Within such a structure, the teacher's responsibility as an active subject making defensible decisions is marginalized in a milieu dominated by accountability and the achievement of educational objectives. Pursuit of pre-defined objectives comes to contradict teachers' broader aspirations for their students as they find it more and more impossible to deviate from these set objectives and create situations that bring about unanticipated outcomes in their students. The time-honoured view of the teacher's role involving phronesis--the moral disposition to act rightly, truly, prudently and responsively according to individual circumstances in the classroom--is, thus, relegated to the margins of the discourse of teaching and teacher education.

The contradiction between repressive school structures and the maintenance of a critically reflective stance also emerged in the conversations. While the language about critical reflection represents it as specific behaviours to be engaged in to promote critical reflection in practice, the reality of working in the school system contradicts such language. As many of the participants in this study appear to be saying, those teachers who wish to reflect in a meaningful way on their practice often encounter a variety of blockages. For Cliff and Shelly who have worked in the school system for over two decades and for the student teachers as well, lack of time seemed to be a major constraint on critical reflection. The probable reason for this is that very little or no time at all is officially allocated for such reflection in the school system. The daily routine of their work and the increasing demands made on them for a range of increasing responsibilities reduce the possibilities of teachers engaging in critically reflective activities such as taking the time to learn from their own experiences, sharing them with others or critically evaluating these experiences. What free time that Shelly, for instance, had was taken up with students and administrative chores (conversation 3), leaving her no time for collegial discussions and serious thinking about teaching problems and dilemmas. Similarly, time spent planning and grading students' work and performing administrative duties prevented Cliff also from collaborating in university-initiated teacher education programmes or carrying out research of any sort to improve his practice (conversation 2). Even the student teachers, whose responsibilities were limited mainly to the classroom, found it difficult to balance their active workdays with their private lives. In the case of Mary, for example, time was limited to the point of frustration:

> ....We (the student teachers with whom she taught) planned to meet once every two weeks to talk about problems we might have in teaching...but somehow, we have not been able to come round to it...
> (conversation 3).

The administrative climate in the school can also play a powerful role in constraining teachers' orientation towards critical reflection. As Shelly pointed out during our third conversation, school administration first has to recognize the positive relationship between critical reflection and meaningful teaching before creating working conditions that promote such deliberation upon practice.

From the foregoing it can be seen that the language about critical reflection and practice has revealed limitations that have only emerged as a result of reflecting critically on that language. What Gadamer refers to as an "infinity of the unsaid" (Bernstein, quoting Gadamer in Wachterhauser, 1986, p.159) implies that no linguistic account is completely univocal but carries within it possibilities of arriving at unspoken meanings. By searching for the implicit and the unsaid in the accounts about critical reflection and teaching, we have been able to acquire new understandings relating to this orientation to practice.

Chapter VI

Exploring Critical Reflection for Teacher Education and Teaching in Sierra Leone

A. Introduction

In this study, I have attempted to understand the meaning of teaching by conducting a research into the meaning of critical reflection and its relevance to teaching. The aim was to arrive at a deeper understanding of how teacher education programmes in Sierra Leone could be structured to prepare teachers to break away from the current frame of teaching and make possible a different kind of practice grounded in responsible pedagogy. Under the assumption that such a practice could be arrived at through teachers reflecting critically on their teaching practices and life situations and acting in their own ways to repair what is lacking in teaching, I have attempted, in a large part of the preceding chapters, to interpret teaching in terms of its dominant technical orientation and the pedagogical implications of this orientation. In the process, I have noted that if our vision of teaching is the possible achievement of what we deem as decent, humane and just in education (Greene, 1978), then current practices in teaching and teacher preparation need to be attentive to thinking about what we do as teachers and teacher educators.

In this chapter I shall explore possible directions for teacher education in Sierra Leone based on a critically reflective orientation to practice. I use the word "possible" deliberately because, in the past, there has been a tendency in Sierra Leone to accord researchers the "master's position" (Lather, 1992) of formulating theories which not only guide but actually direct and control policies and practices in educational ventures. This practice implies the technicist reliance upon a reliable body of knowledge existing to direct practice. To interpret my research as such a body of knowledge will be contrary to my own intention and the intentions of critical reflection itself. Rather than positing my research as constituting a totalizing discourse about teaching and teacher education in Sierra Leone or a panacea for the present educational problems in the country, I have attempted to avoid the "master's position" by recognizing, through a self-reflexive and deconstructive process, the particularity and provisionality of my sense-making effort in this study. More specifically, I regard my study only as a possibility to be explored for future teacher preparation and teaching in Sierra Leone. Fenstermacher (1980) differentiates between two ways of putting research findings into practice: through rules (instrumentally) and through discussion of evidence (conceptually). In using rules to communicate research findings the recipient is directed to behave in ways that imitate the findings rather than being encouraged to consider the applicability of the research finding and the evidence upon which it is based. In using the discussion of evidence or conceptual approach, the research findings are allowed to confront the beliefs that teachers hold about their work, while they thoughtfully confront the meaning and applicability of the findings. The expectation placed on teachers is that their deliberation on the evidence of the research findings will inform practice. It is hoped that my research findings in this study will be embraced in a conceptual way by teachers and teacher educators in Sierra Leone.

Keeping in mind this cautionary note I shall attempt to address three questions in particular in this chapter:

1. What is there in indigenous African education that can sustain critically reflective practice in Sierra Leone?
2. What limitations do I envisage on such practice in a traditional society like Sierra Leone?
3. What possibilities exist in the themes and interpretations in this study for the improvement of teaching and teacher education in Sierra Leone?

These three questions are focused on the question of application of my research to improve pedagogical practices in Sierra Leone. Gadamer (1984) gives emphasis to the importance of application to all understanding when he writes:

> ...Knowledge which cannot be applied to the concrete situation remains meaningless and even risks obscuring the demands that the situation makes (p.279).

In chapter III, I discussed Gadamer's notion of understanding as application involving phronesis (ethical know-how) within which there is always a distinctive mediation between universal knowledge and its specific application in particular situations. Throughout my investigation into the meaning of critical reflection for meaningful teaching in Sierra Leone, this understanding of application as phronesis has remained foremost in my mind. Because my intention was not to apply the meanings that have emerged in this study to teaching and teacher education in Sierra Leone without consideration for pedagogical situations in Sierra Leone I have lived personally with the texts of the conversations, reflecting constantly upon participants' meanings in order to address the preceding questions.

B. **Drawing upon indigenous African education to support and sustain reflective practice in Sierra Leone**

To address the first question, I decided to take a closer look at indigenous education in Africa before colonialism in order to see what it had to offer that educators could draw upon to construct a curriculum of teacher education that is oriented towards critical reflection in practice. Three components of indigenous African education which could support and inform critically reflective practice in Sierra Leone stood out easily. These were: interwoven theory and practice; story-telling, proverbs and anecdotal narratives; collaborative group work.

Interwoven theory and practice

One of the concerns of critical reflection in practice is to bridge or narrow the gap that exists between the theories from teacher education courses and the practices of teaching itself. In other words, how can theoretical abstractions about teaching be related to practical situations in classrooms?

My experience and knowledge about indigenous African education reveal that it contains something that reflective practice could draw upon to address the theory/practice problem in education. In Africa, indigenous education is for an immediate introduction to society and preparation for adulthood. It emphasizes job orientation, social responsibility, religion, moral values and community participation. These aims are interwoven with the content (which is dictated by the needs and purposes of the society) and the instructional strategies, which makes it easy to transfer theory to practice in the system. For instance , if the aim of the indigenous curriculum is to teach farming, children do not receive elaborate theoretical discussions about farming from adults. From an early age, they simply accompany adults to the farms where they participate in farming activities. They learn by observing and doing what adults do. Because every education is focused on entering adulthood, even in their games, the work and ways of the adult provide the material for the play of children. Objective knowledge is not imparted as such because it is not believed that one first develops an understanding of things and events in the human field and then apply this knowledge to judgments and decisions. Rather, as Bernstein (1987) points out, the quest for understanding is conditioned and constituted by reflection upon how to act wisely in concrete human situations. Gadamer's (1984) argument for "an inextricable connection of the theoretical and practical in all understanding" holds true in the African philosophy of education. Any theory emerging from such a system will be grounded in practice and knowledge will be practice-based. Unfortunately, curriculum activities in schools since the colonial era are far removed from this indigenous way of viewing curriculum. Curricular aims, content and methodology are far from linked and, consequently, there is usually little connection between educational goals as they are set and teaching behaviours. If curriculum developers borrowed from the indigenous practice of interweaving aim, content and methodology for critically reflective practice, teaching could be much more focused and meaningful in Sierra Leone.

Story-telling, anecdotal narratives and proverbs

Stories, anecdotes and proverbs are teaching devices in indigenous African education that educators could draw upon to give support and sustainability to a curriculum of teacher education which encourages critical reflection in teaching. Pre-literate African culture was characterized by an oral tradition that found expression in stories and anecdotes which provoked a great deal of reflection. Even though there is now an increase in the literacy rate in Africa, this oral tradition continues to play an important role in the indigenous education of the young. In almost every culture in "Black Africa" adults are known to gather youngsters around a fire in the evenings and tell them great stories and legends about the tribal past and help the youngsters grasp the prevailing ethical standards of the tribe. Stories that personify animal characters are often told and these stories, while explaining the peculiar trait of each animal, also uphold the virtues valued by the society. Anecdotes and proverbs are used particularly as powerful educative tools. While a great deal of traditional wisdom and folklore are expressed through proverbs, anecdotes have the ability to reveal the characteristics and qualities of situations, times and persons in a way that is hard to capture in clear language or direct manner (Van Manen, 1989, citing Fadiman, 1985). For this reason anecdotes and proverbs are used in indigenous African education to teach "good" manners and moral values. The youngsters usually start by listening to a story, anecdote or proverb in a pre-reflective way. Then they engage themselves in a reflective search for its significance and make an interpretive sense of it.

Africans will agree with Van Manen's (1989) argument that anecdotes (and proverbs), when reflected upon, act as mirrors for seeing things in a particular way and that the concreteness of anecdotes, more than any theoretical discourse or philosophical writing, throws light on the concrete reality of a lived experience. As Van Manen further states, anecdotal narratives serve as an important pedagogical device because they provide experiential case material on which pedagogical reflection is possible. As educators get involved in the anecdotes, they are invited to reflect on the meanings embedded in the experiences. Teacher educators could draw upon this teaching device in Africa to structure a teacher education programme that encourages student teachers to listen to stories about teaching and reflect upon them to derive meanings that could inform and guide their practice.

Collaborative group work

Collaborative group work has been proposed by some educators (e.g., Zeichner & Liston, 1987; Bullough & Gitlin, 1989) as a crucial component of a teacher education programme designed to promote critical reflection in practice. Collaborative group work among student teachers, according to these scholars, encourages the development of an "educative community" (Bullough & Gitlin, 1989) that maintains a caring and dialogical collegiality as opposed to the individualism that pervades current teaching practices.

Collaborative group work has always been an integral component of indigenous education in Africa because community development (as opposed to individual interests) is an important objective in the indigenous curriculum. Among the Mende tribe of Sierra Leone, for instance, this objective is instilled into the young from a very early age and certain activities are undertaken to encourage it. Youngsters between the ages of ten years and adulthood are divided into groups known as "age grades" and, from time to time, they are required to perform specific tasks to contribute to the community effort. For example, in a village community all young men belonging to the seventeen-year "age grade" might be assigned the task of building a bridge for the use of the community or asked to help a community member with the harvesting of his/her crops. Girls in the seventeen-year "age grade" in that village will be assigned the task of cooking "kondoi" (food) for the young men while the job is in progress. The assignments are carried out under the supervision of an adult and are performed with great enthusiasm, accompanied by community work-songs rather than by competitiveness and selfishness. Group improvement and interdependence, rather than the competitive individualism that Western schooling has fostered in Africa, provides the major aim of this component of indigenous education. A teacher education programme aimed at eliminating individualism in teaching through the encouragement of collegiality will, therefore, find a tradition of collaborative work ethic on which to draw upon in Sierra Leone.

C. **Possible constraints on critically reflective practice in Sierra Leone**

Despite what it can find to support and sustain it in Sierra Leone, critically reflective practice is likely to present some implementation problems not only in Sierra Leone but in many other traditional cultures in Africa. The problems are lodged within three pedagogical traditions that have existed in many African societies. These are: the indigenous tradition, the colonial tradition and the technical tradition. I will briefly comment on each and show how it could constrain a pedagogy aimed at promoting critical reflection.

The indigenous tradition

Paramount among the constraints likely to emerge will be a resistance to any teaching method that questions adult knowledge, experience and authority. A crucial objective of indigenous education in Africa is the preservation of the tribal or community heritage and this is done largely through the transmission of tribal values such as unquestioned respect for elders, moral and religious beliefs, to name a few. The successful transmission of these values requires obedience and conformity on the part of the educands. As I pointed out in Chapter V adults consider it their responsibility to determine what to teach young people and young people are expected to accept adult knowledge and authority without questioning them. Any manner of relating to the curriculum that challenges this authority will be undesirous as an educational aim in traditional African cultures.

Although this approach to pedagogy has helped to hold the community together and has minimized the loss of parental control over children in Africa, it has also been criticized by many African educators (e.g., Duminy, 1973) as transforming African children into submissive youngsters who, though biologically equipped with the same keen interests and imagination as their counterparts from other cultures, quickly come to lack the spirit of initiative, creativity and critical thinking.

The colonial tradition

An indigenous approach to pedagogy that encourages conformity rather than critical action constituted a mechanistic training tradition which provided an easy breeding ground for colonial teaching strategies which were aimed at actively discouraging critical thinking on the part of learners. As I pointed out in the introduction to this study, the aim of education in Africa during the colonial period was short-term--to produce Africans who could read and teach the Bible and fill in the few clerical positions that existed in the civil service. Economic concerns, and not considerations of human development and enhancement through education, were the focus of colonial administration. Therefore, even though a large amount of revenue was derived from mining and the cultivation of cash crops which were exported, very little was spent on social services such as education. As

Appiah (1992, p.164) notes "...the colonial states were made for raising, and not spending, government revenue." A recent study of colonial administration conducted in 1989 captures well what the post-colonial nations of Africa inherited by way of institutions and agencies, including that of education:

> The formal agencies transferred to African hands were...alien in derivation, functionally conceived, bureaucratically designed, authoritarian in nature and primarily concerned with issues of domination rather than legitimacy (Chazan et al, quoted in Appiah, 1992, p.164).

When Africans took over the reins of power after independence they were under the illusion that the apparent ease of the colonial administration would allow them to pursue their much ambitious objectives of massive development such as the building of roads, agricultural extensions and social and economic transformation through education. Once they turned towards the concrete realization of these tasks, however, they found out that the colonial kingdom had been designed to manage limited goals and, therefore, proved unequal to these tasks.

The limited aims of education dictated the disabling teaching methods which consisted mainly of knowledge transmission and reproduction during examinations. Many of the teachers currently in classrooms in Sierra Leone were trained in this colonial tradition and maintain a simple approach to teaching that renders it an easy compromise requiring less effort on their part. Changing this type of orientation towards teaching for one involving more commitment and responsibilities such as those required by critically reflective practice would mean a complete change of attitude in teachers and teacher educators.

The technical tradition

As education has become increasingly linked with economic development, teaching has come to embrace, on an even larger scale, the technical orientation in Sierra Leone. As

I have also argued in the introduction to this study the technical orientation has discouraged any critical reflection upon teaching practices as teacher education has focused solely on the cultivation of those skills by which the subject matter is effectively imparted. Within the orientation teachers' perception of their role is limited to what Gitlin & Smyth (1989) call a "public service ideology" wherein teachers define themselves as purveyors of information through official channels such as curriculum and prescribed textbooks. The source, purpose or relevance of the information is not questioned. Teaching and student learning are not made problematic because they are shaped more by management concerns of teachers to satisfy values compatible with organizational controls and institutional efficiencies.

Trapped within these three traditions, all of which actively militate against critical inquiry in favour of an unproblematic approach to teaching, teachers in Sierra Leone will not find it easy to change over to a pedagogical approach that is as demanding as that proposed by critically reflective practice. And yet, as Warner (1990) argues, because teachers are not victims but active agents in confirming and promoting these limited purposes of teaching, there is a possibility for change.

Towards improved pedagogical practices through critical reflection

Having examined the possibilities for, and likely constraints on, critically reflective practice in Sierra Leone I return, in this section, to the study itself to explore how the meanings of critical reflection could be drawn upon for teacher education aimed at improved pedagogical practices in Sierra Leone.

The research has revealed that much of critical reflection in teaching is about critical inquiry which seems to be lacking in teaching practices in Sierra Leone. A starting point towards an improved pedagogical practice has to be an emphasis on the preparation of teachers to be reflective, critical inquirers who, through modeling, will eventually pass on the habits of critical reflection and inquiry to their students. This means preparing teachers committed to and having the desire "to think" what they are doing. In this sense, thinking is related to Michel Foucault's understanding of it as:

> ...the motion by which one detaches oneself from what one does, establishes it as an object, and reflects upon it as a problem (quoted in Greene, 1988, p.2).

There has been much rhetoric in Africa since independence about education functioning to emancipate people and improve the quality of their lives. Little thought has been given to inquiring into whether our tradition of banking concept and practice of education is serving to bring about the achievement of these desired goals. What is needed is the preparation of teachers who critically question current educational practices and strive towards innovative instructional strategies which will enable those experiencing education to utilize their acquired skills and knowledge to play a central role in changing their lives for the better. Emancipatory education starts with teachers who possess the capacity to surpass the given and look at things as if they could be otherwise. The preparation of such teachers has to be grounded in educational ideas which have their origins, broadly speaking, in the work of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. Critical reflection in teaching, from Freire's perspective, would consist of four forms of action characterized by a number of moments linked to a series of questions:
(1) Describe--what do I do? (2) Inform--what does this mean? (3) Confront--how did I come to be like this? (4) Reconstruct--how might I do things differently? (I owe this insight to John Smyth, 1992).

Describing involves teachers articulating adequately in their own language the principles and assumptions behind current educational practices, especially teaching, in order to gain an understanding of the knowledge, beliefs and values underlying practice and how these create limit situations for teachers. Within teacher education, then, the feelings, assumptions and definitions of what constitutes teaching should be the focus of critical reflection for prospective teachers.

Informing consists of unraveling and explaining the contradictions which emerge from the descriptions, the nature of the forces that cause teachers to operate the way they do and how they can move beyond descriptions to concrete action for change.

Confronting involves re-evaluating ideas and practices that are taken for granted in teaching, their origins, the social practices expressed in them, whose interest they serve and how they are maintained as constraints on what is possible in teaching.

Reconstruction is the stage where the three steps described above prepare teachers to harness the reflective process so as to begin to act in ways that bring about change. This means that teachers come to see teaching acts not as immutable givens but as social constructions that are essentially contestable. When teachers construct portrayals of their own teaching within the particularities of that teaching, then they are able to demystify what appears unexplainable, take control of their practice and act to achieve what they consider as desirable in that practice. In short, we will be preparing teachers able to critically engage practice in a post-colonial context.

Critical inquiry within teacher education must also extend into indigenous education itself and question whether our tradition of uncritically accepting authoritative teachings of parents, teachers and other significant adults simply out of deference to authority figures augers well for our survival in today's world. Although an intimate relationship exists between personal identity and particular traditions which, if rejected, takes away from our "personness" as human beings, I have to argue that human beings are not passive in the way traditions define identity. As Fay (1987) argues, human beings can affirm some of their inherited traditions, cultivate or transmute them, embrace them or recombine and recreate them in novel ways. Indeed, continuing to be a person means constantly working through these traditions and maintaining certain elements of it while rethinking others. Hoy (1982) quotes Gadamer on the issue of tradition and change:

> ....Tradition is not merely what one knows to be and is conscious of as one's own origin....Changing the established forms is no less a kind of connection with the

> tradition than defending the established forms. Tradition exists only in constant alteration (Hoy, 1982, p.127, quoting Gadamer).

I interpret Gadamer in the above quote to mean that in addition to having a past which affects us in innumerably complex ways, we also have a present that is always in some ways different from the past and that is animated by concerns and interests that drive it towards the future. Thus, as Wachterhauser (1986) notes, the past shapes us but we contribute to its outcome by responding to it in light of our current needs and interests. As we open ourselves to situations we seek to understand we are forced to become aware of "problematic pre-judgments" (traditions) (Wachterhauser, 1986, p.38) and to re-examine them in the light of newly emergent meanings. The real issue would seem to be, according to the Indian philosopher, Ashis Nandy, the political will to read tradition as an open-ended text rather than as a closed entity.

Cumulative events, such as the European infiltration into Africa, the subsequent colonization of the African continent and the Western style of education which colonialism brought in its wake, have all led to a present that is different from our past as well as concerns that are playing an important role in the shaping of our future. This situation involves questions about how to educate teachers to function meaningfully in such a context. It involves the channeling of teachers' reflection to focus on questioning certain aspects of traditional educational practices (such as the uncritical acceptance of authority) which may have served well to hold the community together, but now need to be examined critically vis-a-vis incoming authoritative ideas about teaching, education and development. Upon such critical examination depends our very survival as a culture amidst the juggernaut of Western modernity which presently threatens every non-Western civilization. We must appreciate that the pre-school experiences of indigenous education which discourage critical questioning are bound to shape and mediate the way the African child experiences Western style education. Having learned early in the home not to question, disrespect or disobey authority the child comes to extend these values to school authorities such as teachers, texts and curriculum, and take for granted whatever these say to him or her. It is my belief that children could be taught to assume a critical voice without necessarily devaluing, destroying or disrespecting authority. A critical voice, rather than destructive criticism, attempts the delicate work of re-articulating the tensions within practices, constraints and possibilities even as it questions the taken-for-granted knowledge that shapes everyday life (Britzman, 1991). Such an orientation towards critique is what needs to be emphasized in teacher education.

If teacher education gives more recognition to the crucial importance of critical inquiry to teaching, those working conditions which mitigate opportunities for inquiry could be reversed. For example, after their disaster with the 1972 social studies curriculum, teachers began advocating for more teaching resources that could make the inquiry approach to teaching possible. In several private schools where classes are usually smaller, timetables were altered to give teachers more opportunities to engage in inquiry-related activities in their classrooms. The government-sponsored schools are still fighting to get similar opportunities and a step in the right direction was taken when teachers began conducting social studies classes outdoors because of the smallness of classroom sizes. An improved practice requires that more of the national budget be allocated to education so that more resources could become available to enable inquiry teaching methods to be implemented.

The participants have also established a link between critical reflection and responsible pedagogy. In order to move towards improved teaching and teacher education in Sierra Leone, pedagogy itself needs to be re-defined in a post-colonial society. In this re-definition Simon's (1988) distinction between an everyday understanding of teaching and pedagogy becomes significant. He writes,

> There is an important distinction to be made between the notions of teaching and pedagogy. Usually, talk about teaching refers to specific strategies and techniques to use in order to meet predefined, given objectives...however, it is an insufficient basis for constituting a practice whose aim is the fulfillment of human possibility. What is required is a discourse about practice that references not only what we as

> educators might actually do, but, as well, the social visions such practices would support....Pedagogy is simultaneously about the details of what students and others might do together and the cultural politics such practices support. Thus, to propose a pedagogy is to propose a political vision (p.2).

Simon's view of pedagogy reinforces Lusted's (1986) oft-quoted definition of pedagogy as:

> ...the transformation of consciousness that takes place in the intersection of three agencies--the teacher, the learner and the knowledge that they together produce (Quoted in Lather, 1991, p.101).

Both Simon and Lusted are, in essence, arguing that teaching is not a neutral practice that leaves learners unchanged. Teachers, whether consciously or not, do help to organize the way students perceive themselves and the world. A pedagogical vision, far from limiting the practice of what goes on in classrooms, should offer possibilities for the growth and empowerment of students to take greater responsibility for success in life. Because success here is not defined solely in terms of material advancement but also in terms of the learner's greater understanding and critical appreciation of his/her own subjectivity and relationship to the wider society, it would seem that such a pedagogy would refuse to instrumentalize the relations between the teacher, student and knowledge. It also denies the teacher as a neutral transmitter of knowledge, the student as passive recipient of knowledge and knowledge as immutable material to be imparted (Lather, 1991).

The participants in this study appear to hold the view that such a concept of pedagogy could be arrived at through an understanding of critical reflection as pedagogical responsibility. Such an understanding will help focus our vision of teaching more on interactive processes between students and teachers than mere transmissive or technical performance. In Sierra Leone, the preparation of teachers towards this interactive process must begin with a re-examination of our current perception of teacher education as training. As one of the participants in my research pointed out,

> ...training implies the mechanistic and uncritical transference of something someone has learned to another person in the hope of perpetuating the status-quo (Mary, conversation 3).

If we consider our pedagogical acts as a central issue in the struggle for a better world, then we need to allow our student teachers to experience not training, but education which carries within it possibilities for human enhancement. Instead of the present teacher education curriculum which closes these possibilities by training teachers oriented towards a perception of teaching that is limited to knowledge transmission, we need to move towards a curriculum which sensitizes student teachers to a deeper understanding of teaching including the responsibility of relating to students in ways that lead to their broader enhancement through the educational process.

The post-colonial period in Africa has often been referred to as the post-modern period, characterized by two conditions: an incredulity towards all meta-narratives (Lyotard, 1984) and an "ambiguous" cultural context. Both of these conditions speak to the need to prepare teachers able to harness their reflective powers towards how best to carry out teaching in these conditions. Although many African educators now see several ideas and practices in education as meta-narratives to be rejected, yet, as teacher educators, we still have to recognize our own prescriptive teachings as meta-narratives which constrain possibility for student teachers because they have become totalizing discourses that assume a fixed ground for teaching rather than a fluid and interactive process that encourages deep inquiry for our students. Much of this "fixity" in our teaching is rooted in our fear of facing teaching as fundamentally a flux comprising vulnerability and uncertainty. As educators we tend to guard against flux and uncertainty by providing clear-cut answers rather than admitting to our students that we are vulnerable human beings with no absolute answers. Improved practice through critical reflection would require that we now rethink such a position and move away from certainty and denial of vulnerability and raise teaching to the level where it is seen as a "communal venture" (Yeu, 1990) within which we learn together with our students. This means that in teacher education, we create the pedagogical space that allows our own teaching to be questioned and the complex and contradictory voices of student teachers to emerge without fear or embarrassment. Towards this end, the absolute control which we have thus far exercised in teacher education classrooms needs to be relinquished so that we come to listen to the stories and experiences of student teachers and regard them as important in the communal learning venture. Such stepping back on our part to encourage dialogue in no way implies that we become mere facilitators in the expression and assessment of student experiences as several writings on critical pedagogy have suggested. The "mere facilitator" position would also limit possibilities, for it would mean that we are rendering student experiences an unproblematic vehicle for self-affirmation and self-consciousness (Giroux, 19991). What is needed in classrooms is not an over-privileging of student voices but the facilitation of a critical assessment of such voices by the students themselves so that they understand the limits and possibilities of their particular positions. This way we prepare them to enter dialogue with others. The recognition of student voices implies affirmation of their otherness in the teaching-learning process which would, hopefully, lead to similar affirmation on their part for their own students.

Improved practice in a post-colonial context would also require that in teacher education we help student teachers become reflective about teaching within the cultural "ambiguity" that now characterizes post-colonial Africa. Because of centuries of Western European impact on Africa (beginning with trade relations and culminating in outright conquest and colonization) it is no longer possible to postulate a unitary Africa over/against a monolithic West-- binarism between a distinct self (as African) and "Other" (as Europeans). Indeed education itself in Africa occurs within the two cultures of Africa and the West, making increasing demands on any teacher functioning within such an educational milieu. The cultural ambiguity I am referring to is best expressed by Malech (1976) who graphically describes the post-colonial teacher in Africa in these words:

> He or she must not only be a living model of the Oxford accent but must also call the tune of "harambe" (ourselves as Africans) with visible enthusiasm and participate in traditional circumcision ceremonies with perfect sincerity (p.17).

This renders post-colonial teaching a radically hermeneutical process (Vattimo, 1988) involving an attention to the creation of dialogue between the two educational cultures so that teachers are able to retain their own heritage while remaining open to ideas from the West (or from other cultures) which they might consider desirable and useful. It is only when teachers understand post-colonial teaching in this way that we can realistically work towards the realization of genuine emancipatory education. How we might prepare teachers to relate to teaching within such a context should be the focus of critical reflection in teacher education programmes.

Coming to teaching and teacher education with a colonial experience, I have been fascinated by Kierkegaard's (in Caputo, 1987) argument that no matter how much is subtracted from the individual there is always a "remainder" that could embrace the task of constituting the self as a self. This constituting process, according to Kierkegaard, involves what he refers to as "repetition" which, for him, is a forward rather than backward movement. Through the process of repetition the individual is able to press forward,

> ...not toward a sheer novelty which is wholly discontinuous with the past, but into the being which he himself is....Repetition is that by which the existing individual circles back on the being which he has been all along, that by which he returns to himself...(quoted in Caputo, 1987, p. 12).

Colonialism did take a lot away from Africans and neo-colonialist concepts and ideas continue to systematically influence the perceptions of many Africans. In the midst of such incessant "dispersal of the self" there is need for individuals to define themselves in terms of their broader collective hopes. The definition starts with the situation in which individuals find themselves and moves towards the freedom to actualize possibilities. If, indeed, we are educating for a post-colonial vision of a better future, then we ought to prepare teachers who see current educational practices in Sierra Leone not as a given but as an opportunity to question endlessly their own motives, attitudes, actions, traditions and thought processes through critical reflection upon teaching. To question is not to be pathologically skeptical about everything; it only means to be critically self-aware. This way we will be educating students who become not only their own change agents but individuals who, by the same token, change the world.

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APPENDIX A

8, 8616-108 ST.
Edmonton
Alberta
T6E 4M4
Jan.30, 1991

Dear..........,

I am a foreign student from Sierra Leone, West Africa, studying for a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Alberta. I am also a teacher educator interested in the improvement of teaching at both pre-service and in-service levels.

My thesis interest is in the area of reflective practice, particularly critical reflection in teaching and I believe that your contributions will be extremely valuable to me as I inquire into the meaning of critical reflection and its relevance to meaningful teaching.

My research centres around ways in which critical reflection can be encouraged and promoted in teacher education so that teachers can relate to their students in pedagogically responsible manner. I am especially interested in your views on the meaning of critical reflection in social studies teaching and how you think this can be encouraged in teacher education.

I believe that by conversing with you and other teachers and student teachers of social studies, we may come to a deeper understanding of critical reflection in teaching. The conversations will, hopefully, require three meetings each lasting one hour or so. Appropriate meeting times will be negotiated between us.

On the attached page are listed some general questions that indicate my research interest. Please consider these questions as mere possibilities for us in the research conversations that will take place between us. You may wish to add questions of your own which I have not included here as well as highlighting certain questions on my list that are of particular interest to you.

With the busy schedule that you may have, I recognize that you may not have the time to write a reply to this letter but I will contact you again in the next few weeks to find out if you will find it possible to participate in my study.

Yours sincerely,

Yatta Kanu.

APPENDIX B

Questions to open and guide our research conversations

(For the student teachers)

1. What does the expression "critical reflection in teaching" mean to you?
2. How would you describe what you consider to be "good teaching"?
3. What views did you have about teaching before you experienced the EDSEC 375/76 EDPR 354 course?
4. Have these views changed in any way as a result of your experiencing the course? In what way?
5. What part did "critical reflection" play in the changes that might have occurred in your views about teaching?
6. What do you think about "critical reflection" in teaching social studies?
7. What aspects of the course promoted "critical reflection", in your opinion? (e.g. journal writing, group work, the action research project, the call-back session, etc.)

8. During your teaching practicum, did you take initiatives that went beyond the routine curriculum?

   If so, why was this necessary?

   Were there any constraints on doing this?

9. What teaching methods did you find helpful in promoting "criticalreflection " in the course? Why?

10. Did you use any of these methods in your own teaching during the practicum?

11. Was your co-operating teacher supportive of these methods?

12. Was your faculty consultant supportive of them?

13. What do you think of evaluation as a component of the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 course?

12. What did you think of the evaluation you received from your co-operating teacher and your faculty consultant? Did it promote critical reflection on your part about your teaching?

13. How, in your opinion, can critical reflection be encouraged and promoted in social studies teaching?

14. How , in your opinion, can the gap between theory and practice in teaching be narrowed?

14. Did you find any differences in the students in your classroom?

    How did you deal with difference in your classroom?

15. How did you experience the social studies classroom?..Were they conducive to social inquiry?

16. How would you describe your classroom? (open, tightly controlled, inquiry-oriented, dialogic, etc).

17. What do you think about the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 programme as far as promoting critical reflection is concerned? Are there any changes you wish to recommend?

18. What was the most valuable experience you learned from the practicum?

For the co-operating teachers

1. What does "critical reflection" in social studies teaching mean to you?

2. Do you encourage student teachers to engage in critically reflectiv activities? (e.g.questioning the reasons and rationales for your teaching practices?

3. Do you provide opportunities for student teachers to create and implement materials and ideas that go beyond the routine curriculum?

4. Do you engage in conversations about teaching with colleagues?

5. Where do you put your emphasis in your evaluation of student teachers? (technical skills, classroom control, evidence of professional growth, etc)

6. Were you involved in the university component of the EDSEC 375/6 course?

7. If so, do you think this involvement was sufficient for you to participate in the programme in a meaningful way?

8. Was the involvement helpful to you? In what way?

9. How would you describe yourself as teacher? (how do you conceptualize teaching?)

10. Is critical reflection a part of your practice?

11. If so, what is the nature of this reflection? (What do you reflect about?)

12. How would you describe your present methods of teaching social studies?

13. Do you get any support/reward/recognition from your school administration for your involvement in critically reflective activities?

14. How can we narrow the gap between theory and practice in teaching?

15. Do you think the EDSEC EDPR programme is adequately structured to promote and encourage critical reflection in teaching?

16. Are there any improvements or changes in the programme you wish to recommend?

For the faculty consultants

1. What does "critical reflection" in teaching social studies mean to you?

2. What are the evidences of critical reflection you look for in the student teachers you supervise?

3. How often do you visit student teachers during the practicum? Is this contact time enough to interact with them in a meaningful way?

4. Were you involved in the university component of the EDSEC 375/6 programme?

5. If so, was this involvement sufficient for you to participate in the course in a meaningful way?

6. Where do you put your emphasis in your evaluation of student teachers?(their teaching skills; classroom management and control; inquiry methods; evidence of professional growth, etc.).

7. Do you encourage or reward critically reflective teaching activities in student teachers?

8. Do you think the EDSEC 375/6 EDPR 354 is adequately structured to promote and encourage critical reflection in teaching?

9. Are there any improvements or changes you wish to recommend in the programme?